"THE DIAMONDS OF THE COUNTESS," A THRILLER, IN NEXT WEEK'S ISSUE

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THE MOSS MILL MYSTERY;

Or, THE LADY OF THE STAIR.

By MAJOR ALBION F. GRANT.

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CHAPTER I.

THE SUMMONS

It had never known, until the knowledge was forced upon me by circumstances which I shall never forget, where the village of Moss Mill was situated.

I had been connected with the Independent Detective Bureau for two years, but my work had seldom taken me beyond the limits of the city. Therefore, I had never cared much for the outside working grounds and, as a rule, I am almost ashamed to confess it, I had but little knowledge of the outside world.

It was just six o'clock when I entered the private office of our chief to find him alone. As I closed the door he looked up at me with one of his quizzical smiles and exclaimed:

"You're just the man I want, Geyer! Do you know where Moss Mill is?"

I responded with a shake of my head.

"I hardly know myself, and had to consult the map. The place has suddenly come into our being. But for a little telegram, which came an hour ago, we might have remained in ignorance of its whereabouts to the end of our days."

The telegram was dated at Moss Mill, and gave the hour of its transmission.

"Here it is," he resumed, pushing a bit of yellow paper toward me. "The alliteration is somewhat amusing, and the sender's name almost provokes a smile."

I picked up the message and, with another glance at the chief, read as follows:

"Miss Marigold murdered. Send best man immediately. PERICLES PLUMP."

I took a chair and looked across the table at Chief Grenaway.

"Here it is," he resumed, pushing a bit of yellow paper toward me. "The alliteration is somewhat amusing, and the sender's name almost provokes a smile."

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tee who Pericles Plump is, and what there is in the case. You can take the 8:30 train tonight and get there about half-past ten. The express does not stop at Moss Mill. You can go, eh, Geyer? Nothing on your hands?"

"Nothing but the Manson matter and that can rest a few days."

"Certainly. We won't trouble about that affair till you're through down below. Somehow or other I'm more interested in Pericles Plump, than in Miss Marigold. The queer name attracts me," and the chief smiled.

"I shall take the 8:30," said I.

"All right. See that you don't get into trouble; those rural folk are queer people and have strong prejudices. You need no instructions, only I will remind you that perhaps some of the Union men may get into the affair."

The Union Detective Agency was our rival in the business, and the best of feeling did not exist between us.

Promptly when the 8:30 pulled into the Union Station, I sprang aboard and took a seat in the second coach. It was fairly well filled for some time I watched from the disappearing city, and at last found myself out in the suburbs. The night was somewhat cloudy, with threatenings of rain, and the train, a local one, rumbled along at what I considered a snail's pace.

I did not take notice of my fellow passengers, and in fact, did not even know who was my nearest neighbor, until the man just ahead turned and remarked that we were going to have a thunderstorm.

I replied that such were the indications, whereupon he said he hoped it would be over by the time we reached Moss Mill, as he would have to drive two miles from the village in an open conveyance.

The name Moss Mill, from his lips attracted me at once, and in a manner not intended to attract suspicion, I asked casually about the place.

My fellow traveler was a man of middle age, named Wilson, a farmer of more than ordinary intelligence, and with a rather humorous drawl to his voice.

So I was going to Moss Mill? Had I ever been there? No? It was a queer place with a lot of fools in it, and a pet of his own who imagined that the earth revolved around them. Mr. Wilson was a little sarcastic, but this only served to heighten my appetite for more information about Moss Mill, though I had to pursue my inquiries with a good deal of adroitness.

"All village folks expect people in them," I remarked. "It seems to be a natural burden."

"Well, yes, I suppose it is," replied Wilson. "But Moss Mill has its share o' such. For instance there's Silvius Westfall, the man who thinks he can discover perpetual motion, and Thunstocket Jones, the preacher, or, who contends that the sun don't move round Pericles Plump."

"Great heavens!" I ejaculated. "Where did they get all those odd names?"

"I'll be bushged if I know. Must a been yeadin' some odd books like Plutarch," laughed Wilson. "You won't find a real sensible name in Moss Mill. Take my own, for instance."

"What *is* it?"

"Alcibiades Wilson. The women folks have names just as queer, too. As I was saying, there's Pericles Plump, the young man who came to Moss Mill seven years ago and taught writing school for a spell, but gave it up for horse doctoring."

"So Mr. Plump is a veterinary surgeon?" I inquired.

"I reckon. He's one o' them odd folks who makes up the population o' Moss Mill."

"That noble?"

"Pastly so," drawled Wilson. "He gets his fingers into every pie that's baked. Thinks he was once cut out for a detective, and for some time wore a badge what he sent for and got by mail."

"I see. A man hunter—"

"What never catched any one," broke in the farmer. "I don't go much on any o' them detectives. They're liable to arrest any person and make about as many mistakes as the next one."

"Then you have never heard of Sherlock Holmes?" I asked.

"Don't know the man," was the reply. "There was a fellow came from the city a year ago when some one broke into Doc Deaton's house. Mebbe that was Mr. Holmes. No? Then I never heard of him."

By this time we were nearing Moss Mill, and as I would be compelled to hunt up lodgings, I inquired of Mr. Wilson for the best. He told me that the Moss House, kept by the widow Smart, was the only hostelry in the village and I mentally said I would try its accommodations.

The train was running on time, and at last pulled up at the little depot at the end of the main street of the sleepy town. I stepped out, bade Wilson good night, and turned into the street. The wind was blowing and a few drops of spring rain pattered in my face. I had paid but little attention to the few persons on the depot platform when I alighted, for I wanted to avoid publicity, and in a few seconds I was walking up the street.

"Where will I find the Moss House?" I inquired of a boy, who nearly ran into me.

"Right down the street. I was right in front, up thar by the town pump, and they've got Clem Marigold, mister, killed her right in her own house, and they've sent for all the detectives in the great city, and—and—"

I stepped a little livelier and left the boy to finish his sentence by himself.

As I walked across the porch of the hotel, which was a two-story frame affair at the town pump, I was conscious that I was the cynosure of a dozen pairs of eyes, and when I stepped inside and the sky vailes down on the floor and asked, the young man who stood behind the desk, if I could be accommodated with lodgings, I felt that I was being regarded by a motley group from the corner.

I pulled the pen out of the potato on the desk and scribbled a name, not my own, and added thereto the name of a place from which I did not hail.

"Yes, Mr. Long," said the clerk. "you shall have the best we have in the house. The murder interests you, I suppose?"

"The murder?"

"Why, town is full of it. Miss Cleopatra Marigold has been found dead in her parlor, murdered, not acting in any sattisfaction, at last gave up. The murder was the sole topic of conversation, and those in the front of the room showed signs of long wear, as though he were either a miser or one who was not able to carry out his desires.

Was this man Pericles Plump? I asked myself.

I was answered in a singular manner, for all at once a dog came howling into the room, and the man I observed sent a vicious kick at the canine, a kick that fell short and landed the little man in a very ungraceful position on the floor.

"You missed him that time, Mr. Plump!" cried one of the spectators. "Leg too short."

The fallen man picked himself up amid general laughter and sent a mad look at the direction taken by the animal. So that man was Mr. Plump, after all.

Ten minutes later I found myself face to face with him in one corner of the little foyer of the hotel. His gray eyes were looking straight at me, and I was trying to discover just what sort of man I was dealing try its accommodations.

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Perfect Womanhood

The greatest menace to woman's permanent happiness in life is the suffering that comes from some derangement of the feminine organs.

Many thousands of women have realized this too late to save their health, barely in time to save their lives.

To be a successful wife, to retain the love and admiration of her husband, should be a woman's constant study.

If a woman finds that her energiesare flagging, that she gets easily tired, dark shadows appear under her eyes, she has backache, headache, bearing-down sensations, nervousness, irregularities or the "blues," she should start at once to build up her system by a tonic with specific powers, such as

Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound

the great woman's remedy for woman's ills, made only of roots and herbs.

It cures Female Complaints, such as Dragging Sensations, Weak Back, Falling and Displacements, Inflammation and Ulceration, and all Organic Diseases, and is invaluable in the Change of Life. It dissolves and Expels Tumors at an early stage. Subdues Faintness, Nervous Prostration, Exhaustion, and strengthens and tones the Stomach. Cures Headache, General Debility, Indigestion, and invigorates the whole female system. It is an excellent remedy for derangements of the Kidneys in either sex.

CHAPTER III.

IN PAPYRUS COURT.

Even if I had wished to retire unnoticed after my arrival in Moss Mill I was not permitted to do so. I soon found myself the object of much curiosity by those who noticed my entrance, and when I came back, I looked over the crowd, wondering which particular individual was Pericles Plump.

I tried to single him out from among those who were watching me, but my satisfaction, at last gave up. The murder was the sole topic of conversation, and those in the front of the room showed signs of long presence.

All at once I noticed a newcomer who fell to staring at me with a good deal of curiosity. He might have been thirty-five; he may have passed his fortieth milestone, I could not tell which, because he was one of those unwholesome looking men who are the best students of human nature.

He was a little man with dark, parchment skin, and a pair of little gray and almost expressionless eyes that were set deeply in a shaking head.

His clothes fitted him loosely, and I noticed that they showed signs of long wear, as though he were either a miser or one who was not able to carry out his desires.

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ence, and for a few moments I scrutinized the mark with the keenness of a detective.

"It may tell a great deal, this hand," said I as I turned around. "The slayer was a dunce to leave—"

I did not complete my sentence for I saw that I was the sole occupant of the chamber. Miss Foxcroft was gone.

"Just like her," I said to myself. "She could remain no longer with a pair of shattered nerves. Well, I will see her again."

After looking the room over thoroughly I turned away and went down the stairs to the lower floor.

"Now for a look at the dead and a little more conversation with Pericles Plump," thought I. "The fellow is either a fool or the murderer. Time will tell which."

To my utter astonishment there was nothing human in the lower room but the silent and stiffening figure on the bier. Mr. Plump, like Iris Foxcroft, had vanished.

For a moment I could hardly credit the evidence in sight, but it was true. The strange man was gone. The candle was drooping in its socket and, seeing that it would not last much longer, I picked it up and went over to the murdered woman.

With reverent hand I pulled back the ghastly covering revealing the white face of the dead woman. I held the candle close, and for the first time studied the features rigid, before me.

Suddenly there came to my ears the sound of footsteps on the front porch and I looked up. The next second I was looking at a face that seemed pressed against the pane and which was gradually revealed by the wan light.

It was not the face of Pericles Plump, neither was it that of Iris Foxcroft. It was a younger face than Dr. Plump's, and it was the face of a man.

I fancied I heard a little cry outside and then the vision faded as quickly as it had come into being.

What answer was the person outside? I dropped the sheet and was at the door in a moment in time to see a dark form which was fringed by a tangle of vines.

What had become of the owner of the face?

I looked in every direction for a reply to my unspoken question, but only the sound I heard was that of the wind that roughed mournfully through the vines and the branches of the old trees, which during part of the day shaded Papyrus Court.

The man was gone, Gaston Bland and Moss Mill, I was sure, had a genuine murder upon it.

The room and its dreadful tenant was behind me; the white face of Miss Marigold came to me when I thought of it and for a little while I stood on the porch unable to collect my thoughts in a rational manner.

"Well, I am here!"

I started as if an arrow had imbedded itself in the pillar at my head.

"I'm the man you want if you are an officer of the law."

I turned at once and looked into the face of a man who had stepped upon the porch and was looking at me with a pair of eyes that seemed to burn their way into my brain.

He was a tall person of perhaps thirty, with a good face and dark eyes, a handsomely rounded figure and, moreover, well dressed.

"You heard me?" he went on, his voice seemingly full of remorse. "I'm the end man of the rolling stone. This is the end of the tether I have tugged at for years, till I broke it and committed this infamous crime. I did it, I tell you. I am or was—she is dead now—Cleo Marigold's nephew, Gaston Bland!"

CHAPTER IV.

IN WHICH THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

That two men should confess to the same murder was something startlingly new in my detective experience. I had never heard of anything like it, and I found myself staring at Gaston Bland's face without language to express my thoughts.

"You don't believe it, I see," he went on as he pushed forward and clutched my arm. "I own that it does seem startling, and you are not prepared for it, but it is a fact. I have been a rolling stone for years and this is the end of it all. You are an officer of the law, aren't you?"

"I am a detective."

"I thought so. I surrender myself to you. Whither will you take me?"

"It's a terrible confession," said I. "Do you know what you have just done? Do you realize that this may mean a noose?—"

"Do you think I would tell you about it if I had not taken everything into consideration? The fool has played out his mad game. She was going to be good to me, but I never gave her time to say so; I did not know till I found her will——"

"You had best not make such statements to me," I interrupted. "I am not a court of law and justice. You don't look like a very bad man——"

"Come, don't flatter me!" he cried. "You're going to take me, eh? You must have the honor of turning Gaston Bland over to the court of justice."

The walk back to Moss Mill was made almost in silence. We did not exchange half a dozen words, and no man walking at my side wrapped up in his own gloomy thoughts.

When we came in sight of the hotel, I noticed a crowd collected at the pump, and the moment I was seen with my companion some one cried out that they had found the fiend murderer and that he had been taken to the lockup by the town marshal.

"And you're the fiend!" I muttered. "But it should be Pericles Plump. I never thought her boss capable of such a cowardly act as that sort, but you can't always tell."

I passed by the crowd and entered the little lockup, and came face to face with the landlady, Mrs. Smart. That woman looked startled at first, but she soon got over then let her gaze settle on my companion.

"Merciful heavens! I never could, in her fotund face whitened. "It's either Gaston Bland or his ghost!"

"Gaston Bland is the fiend, madam," responded that person. "So you recognize me?"

"Don't I? Why, you haven't been here for years, not since you were a boy in short frocks. Gracious me, do you know what has happened at Papyrus Court?"

"Don't I?" said Gaston Bland, and he said man with a quick glance at me. "Ask this gentleman. He is a detective. Pericles Plump is innocent of the crime of Papyrus Court and that I——"

I thrust out my hand to prevent him from finishing his sentence, but he broke away and stood among the half dozen or more curious crowd that blocked the entrance.

"I am the murderer of Cleo and she went on. "I am the guilty person and my hands are red with the blood of Cleo Marigold. You've got the wrong man, Mr. Mill. Here I am. Where is your marshal?"

At that moment the tall man with searching gray eyes came forward and addressed himself to the speaker.

"I am the man," he said in rasping tones. "Two men can't commit the same murder. I am the man in a cathedral manner. You say he is the guilty one and you're just playing a game."

"But he lies—lies from the depths of his soul!" cried Gaston Bland. "He never killed Cleo Marigold. He had no occasion to kill her, and neither had I for that matter. He didn't know I was there when I found out later."

A shudder silence fell after these words and I looked from the strange man to the town marshal.

"Here I am. You needn't handcuff me, for I'll go without that," continued Bland. "I want to pay the penalty for my offence. What a fool I've been, but if she had intimated to me that I was the sole such a horrid crime would never have entered my head."

The town marshal was in a dilemma. It was clear that he did not know what course to pursue. He had to see Mr. Gordian knot by taking Gaston Bland away.

Since there was no longer any use for me to conceal my identity, I came out and confessed that I was a detective, and in a moment had a score of questions poured into my ears. Which man did I believe guilty? Had not confessed to the murder of Miss Marigold, and it was equally certain that but one hand had committed the deed. Gaston Bland confessed to the crime when but one was guilty?

At last I got rid of the questioners and went to my room to think it out if possible.

I heard the town folks arguing the matter in the hotel office for hours at a time, but myself seeking their beds, the whole town seemed to be congregated at the old pump.

I listened for some time at my window to the fluctuations of the arguments and now and then smiled at the quaintness of some of them. The crowd was about equally divided, and, while some laughed at the idea that Pericles Plump could commit such a heinous crime, others just as emphatically took the stand that Gaston Bland was innocent.

It was with this animated discussion buzzing in my head that I went at last upon. The little room with its neatness wooed me to dreamland, and in a little while I was far beyond the confines of the material and in the midst of the visionary.

That night I dreamed, would be an important one in Moss Mill, I did not doubt. The coroner would be summoned and inquest. He would impannel his jury and its wise heads would be all the better for a Papyrus Court to the bottom and lay it at the door of one of the two men under lock and key in the town lockup.

The sun was in my face when I opened my eyes to the realities of the new day. I sprang from bed and looked down at the pump. The same little crowd was there, but it was now a silent admixture of wisdom and expectation.

The town folks had sent its tones through the house and I hastened below for the adventure of the previous night had put a keen edge on my appetite.

Mrs. Smart, out of consideration of my important task served me at a table by myself and waited on me with her own fair hands. She was a little garrulous, was the widow Smart, good looking and buxum, as all widows should be, and I soon found myself in a run of conversation which she carried on mostly herself.

"When you are through, there's a person in the parlor as wants to see you," she confided in low tones.

"Yes. I shall be there in a few moments," re-

"She's a queer creature, a girl what shows a good deal of impatience. Mebbe she knows something about the affair at Papyrus Court. I shouldn't wonder."

Concluding hastily I went from the dining room to the parlor off the main hall and opened the door. The little room was dark, but as I closed the door a figure that had been seated, rose and pulled one of the curtains aside.

"To my astonishment Iris Foxcroft stood before me!

Her face was still white and I feared she had had little sleep the previous night.

"I had to come to you," she said in low tones which were filled with feeling. "I must beg your pardon for quitting the house so hastily last night, but you do not know——"

"I understand. You are in a state of mind which renders you almost distracted."

"Yes, yes!" she exclaimed. "It is terrible, and then to tell me that two men have confessed to that awful crime. Now, one of those men is innocent and perhaps both of them——"

"But," said I, "do you think that two men would confess a murder which they are innocent?"

"It is hardly credible, sir, but it may be the case. The man whom I saw at the house that night was not Mr. Plump. I am quite sure of that. The other man——"

"Gaston Bland——"

"What" broke in the girl, falling back a step and clasping her hands over her heart. "Do you mean to tell me that the other one is Gaston Bland? I heard that some one, not Pericles Plump, had confessed, but they did not mention the name. Gaston Bland? Gaston?—Gaston?—May God have infinite mercy upon me!" and Iris Foxcroft with the last word lingering on her bloodless lips fell in a heap at my feet and lay like one suddenly stricken with death.

This extraordinary story will be continued in the Leading line of next week. Now is a good time to subscribe for the Ledger. Great stories of romance and mystery, of adventures and fascinating detective work, of the exploits of boys and girls, together with poetry and humor are steadily appearing in these pages. You should take the Ledger regularly. If you have not yet subscribed or your subscription has expired, send in your order for the paper at once. Boys who would like our splendid stereoscopes and ladies who desire the latest patterns are requested to note that we are giving these fine premiums absolutely free as announced on pages thirteen and fifteen.

A GOOD STORY FREE

THE DREAM THAT CAME TRUE.

This is a real free list to every reader of this paper. The story will interest every one who longs to own a home in the West and be able to pass their remaining years without being dependent upon others. The West is full of golden opportunities. There is Butte Valley, California, the land of perpetual sunshine, great agricultural yields, and great everything. This great valley includes the poor, the moderately well-off, and the hard-working middle classes to come to its borders and buy land on easy payments and get great harvests. Why should a man toil his years away in a factory or at work for small pay? Why should a man grub away renting a farm in the land of the sunset and see living when for a small sum he may own a splendid farm and not only make a good living, but in many years to come a fortune? Why? Simply because they are not fair to yourself or those of your family who depend on you. Now, before going on, we say and say "Come." The Golden West wants you to come and share in its prosperity. You know persons who have gone out West and made fortunes from small beginnings. Their stories are like dreams to you, but the dream is true. You can have the chance. Just write for the booklet that shows you the way. It seems like a dream to hear of the wonders of Butte Valley, yet everything stated about this great country is true. We want every reader of this paper to send for the story of the "Dream That Came True." It costs you nothing and we will gladly send it to every one who writes. Simply write a note like this: "Please send me a copy of the story of the 'Dream That Came True.' Sign your name and address plainly and address your letter to

E. L. LOMAX, 1324 Farnam St., OMAHA, NEB.

FRESH AT NIGHT

If One Uses the Right Kind of Food.

If by proper selection of food one can feel strong and fresh at the end of a day's work, it is worth while to know the kind of food that will provide this result.

A school teacher of Medin, Kan., says in this connection: "I commenced the use of Grape-Nuts food five months ago. At that time my health was so poor that I thought I would have to give up my work altogether. I was rapidly losing in weight, had little appetite, was nervous and sleepless, and experienced, almost constantly, a feeling of exhaustion. I tried various remedies without good results, then I determined to give particular attention to my food, and have learned something of the properties of Grape-Nuts for rebuilding the brain and nerve centres.

"I commenced using that food and have since made a constant and rapid improvement in health in spite of the fact that all this time I have been engaged in the most strenuous and exacting work.

"I gained twelve pounds in weight and have a good appetite, my nerves are steady and I sleep soundly. I have a strength and reserve force that I feel almost as strong evidence as to the cause of my change for the better.

"Before using Grape-Nuts I was troubled much with weak eyes, but as my vitality increased, my eyes became stronger. I never found so much food as nutritious and economical as Grape-Nuts." Read "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a Reason."

They Both Lost.

A meteorite fell on a Vermont farm in 1896. It was a valuable meteorite, and the owner realized and signed up with a friend, a "All minerals and metals on the land belong to me," he said. "That's the law."

But the tenant demurred. "This meteorite," he said, "wasn't on the farm, you must remember, when you signed up with me."

The landlord perceived the justice of that claim, but nevertheless he argued still. "All minerals and metals," he said, decisively. "I claim her as flying game."

But the tenant was ready for him. "She's got neither wings nor feathers," he said. "Therefore she's ground game, I claim her."

They continued their argument, and in the heat of it a reverend gentleman, driving with a truck, proceeded to put the meteorite aboard. "I claim her for the Government," he said, and he carried her into the country without payment of duty."

New Homes in the West.

Send for free copy of pamphlet containing synopsis of the United States homestead laws and information how to secure a quarter section of agricultural or timber bearing land free along the new railway lines of the Chicago & North-Western Railway, in South Dakota, Wyoming and other States. Special excursion rates to homeseekers. Full information on request to W. B. Kniskern, Passenger Traffic Manager, C. & N. W. Ry., Chicago.

When You're Married.

"Yes," said Thomas Lawson, during a discussion of the recent panic, "the stock market is a guilyful mask. It is like some men's marriages.

"Mr. and Mrs. Smith, lunching at the Waldorf, met Mr. and Mrs. Jones.

"Smith and Jones were in a great time at the club last night. Sorry you missed it, old man."

"Mrs. Jones gave a start, and after the Joneses' departure she said, in an odd voice:

"'John, you told me you spent the whole evening at the club.'

"'So I did, dear,' said her husband, readily. 'And the reason Jones didn't see me there was because I was in the cloakroom, trying to deceive his wife, I supposed.'"

A Dainty Little Maid.

Every one ought to have her. She is dressed in pretty colors and changes the color of her skirt herself when it is going to rain. She indicates when it is going to take an umbrella or when you can do without. She likes the simplest and the handsomest. She is an ornament, a good seller for agents, a pretty gift, a handsome souvenir and useful to any one. She or one of her sisters comes postpaid with full directions for 10 cents. Address: P. Randolph & Co., 78 Dearborn St., Chicago.

No Chance for the Jury.

"Gentlemen of the jury," queried the clerk of the court, "have you fully agreed to disagree?"

"We have," answered the foreman. "The lawyers have bungled the case up so that we don't know any more about it than they do!"

Ladies, Preserve Your Youthful Appearance.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blotch or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and rudditeens to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results.

Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 421, Blairsville, Pa.

Pickerel—Where's that perch that used to hang around here?

Bull Head—Oh, he's just gone down the pike.

Dinks—Twins at your house? I'll bet they're pretty boisterous.

Winks—Partly so. One of them is girlsterous.

Small Sdces.

"The bill of fare for Sunday dinner will be shedded chicken instead of baked chicken," announced the old farmer to the group of boarders.

"I'm!" grunted one pessimist, "what caused the change?"

"What caused the change? Why, by heck, one of them that racing automobiles just ran through my whole flock of poultry."

THE FATAL MILLIONS.

BY EMMA HOWARD WIGHT.

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE NEW WILL.

"Oh, dear! oh, dear! how unhappy I am!" murmured Mary Dungard, as she wiped the tears from her eyes.

She and Gratia were sitting in the latter's boudoir in the evening of the day following the scene at the cottage. They had just come up from dinner, a dreary meal with Winston and Horace both absent. The latter had phoned that he would not be home to dinner as he had a business engagement that evening and would dine at a down-town restaurant.

"You mustn't fret so," said Gratia. She lay upon a couch looking pale and timid. She had not felt very strong of late and Horace Dungard's family physician, Doctor Sumner, had cautioned her against over exertion, while he said a few words to Horace Dungard that changed his anxiety into a delightful hope.

"It is very easy to say that," exclaimed Mary, with a touch of nervous petulance. "But how can I help fretting with poor Winston cast off by Horace, and all because of that bad man's daughter who no doubt bewitched him into ruin as her father did poor Alice."

"Poor girl!" murmured Gratia, pityingly, "she may be all that is good and true. It seems hard that she should have to suffer for her father's sin. I feel very sorry for her and for Winston. Don't you think that Horace may relent after a while?"

Mary Dungard shook her head dejectedly.

"He will never relent," she declared. "You do not know Horace."

"I tried to plead for Winston, but he stopped me and told me never to mention Winston's name to him again. I thought I would speak to him again on the subject, however, but I suppose it would be useless."

"Quite useless."

"I shall never forget Horace's face when he came back to the carriage," said Gratia. "It frightened me."

"Winston once said to me that Horace had grown morbid, a monomaniac in his hatred of Charles Marvin, and I am almost inclined to believe he was right."

"Oh, I don't know about that. I suppose it's the nature to be relentless and unforgiving when he has been wronged. But how good and good and tender he is also."

"Oh, no doubt," said Mary, coolly. She was not in the mood to see that side of her brother-in-law's character.

"I wonder if Horace has come home." Gratia arose as she spoke, "I am going down the library to see."

The library was on the second floor, and, just at the stage of the story, a description of Gratia's apartments will not be amiss.

These rooms, consisting of bed room, dressing room, bath and boudoir, all of which communicated, were situated across the front of the house. No expense had been spared in the furnishing of the suite which was dainty and elegant enough to satisfy the most fastidious. The boudoir had a communicating door leading into a room that had formerly been Horace Dungard's bed room until the recent construction of the library. When he sat up late at night, which frequently happened, reading or writing Horace occupied his old room which he had term the library bed room by way of designation.

When Gratia entered the library, she found her husband seated at his desk writing. He looked up and his pale, haggard face brightened.

"I did not know that you had returned, Horace," she said, as she came to his side and laid her hand on his shoulder.

He drew her to him and kissed her.

"I only returned a short while ago," he said. "You look pale and tired, Gratia; go to bed and get a good night's rest. I will sleep in my old room tonight as I have some writing to do that will keep me here until quite late."

"I will, that you would do as you tell me," she murmured, as she ran her white, jeweled fingers caressingly through his hair. "You look as though you were greatly in need of rest."

"Rest!" he repeated, gloomily. "I doubt if sleep would come to me tonight. There, good-night, my child. I am better left to myself just now."

She lifted her lips and he kissed her again tenderly.

At the door she turned and looked back at him. The light from the student's lamp on the desk fell upon the haggard pallor of his face which had grown tense and stern again. She lingered, for a moment, watching him, and then left him softly out.

Hammond, the butler, had just reached the top of the stairway as she closed the library door.

"There's a young girl below that wishes to see you, ma'am," he said.

"You can show her up to my boudoir, Hammond.

When Gratia entered the boudoir, she found only her maid, Annie, there.

"Where is Miss Mary, Annie?" she asked. "She told me to tell you that she had a headache, ma'am, and was going to bed," replied the maid.

"Madame Rene has sent one of the girls to alter my white satin, Annie, you know she promised to send her this morning. You had better get the dress."

Annie passed into the dressing room.

There was a knock upon the boudoir door. "Come in," said Gratia, and instead of one of the fashionable dressmaker's girls, a young woman, entered whom Gratia at once recognized as Winston's wife.

At that moment Annie came in with the white satin dress over her arm. Gratia turned to her quickly.

"You can go now, Annie," she said. "You can go away and don't come back until I ring for you."

Annie laid the dress over the back of a chair and went on out. As the door closed upon her, Nesta came forward and spoke.

"Mrs. Dungard, forgive me for intruding upon you," she said, a little tremulously. "But I have come in search of Gratia. There was no one else to whom I could appeal."

"I shall be glad to do anything in my power for you," Gratia replied, gently. "Won't you sit down?" she added, as Nesta shook her head.

"I will not stay, Mrs. Dungard," she said. "I want to tell him the truth about the marriage. He believes that Winston married me after he—he knew who my father was, but the truth is, we were married at the time."

"You were married at the time," repeated Gratia, "then Winston's generosity did not relieve Horace, or rather," as she saw Nesta wince, "he withheld that fact from his knowledge?"

"He thought that he was acting for the best," she said.

"But why did he not tell Horace this, yesterday?"

"He declares that it would not have made any difference, but I think that perhaps it would have done so. I have never to myself and I want Mr. Dungard to know the truth. Winston has gone out on the street and the door he would not see me, so I determined to come to you, as I knew you arranged it for me. Oh," as Gratia seemed to hesitate, "don't refuse me. I do not care about the money. I have been poor all my life and I would be happy sharing even poverty with Winston. It is the fact, only, that has been the means of his being repudiated by his brother. Oh, Gratia, he is dying—grief will drive me half wild."

"Does Winston know that you have come here for the purpose of appealing to his brother?" asked Gratia.

"No, he does not. I never have consented to my doing it. He has gone to Philadelphia to see about some property. He will not return until about noon tomorrow."

"I am afraid that there is very little hope of your husband's receiving," said Gratia. "But you shall see him since you so much desire it." She crossed the room and put aside the silk portieres which draped the door leading into the library bed room. "Come," she said, and Nesta arose and followed the way to the opposite door leading into the hall. Gratia opened and looked at Nesta. "My husband is in the room beyond, the library. I think that I could persuade your appeal to him would meet with success. Will you return to the boudoir while I see if he is rather than in private?"

"Yes," Nesta replied. She was pale, but she had grown calm. She shrank unspeakably from coming in contact with Horace Dungard in the library, but Winston's wife and she never faltered in her determination to make use of the chance that offered.

Gratia opened the door and Nesta stepped into the library.

Horace looked up from his writing, as Nesta crossed the room, and, at the sight of her, arose and stood in silence before her.

"How dare you come into my presence?" he said, and his voice was cold as excitement under the same look that she had seen in his eyes the day previous. She knew that his anger was very great, and that she had hardly capable of realizing the effect that her appearance would have upon him. It simply maddened him, deprived him, for the time, of reason, mechanical, almost, that he forget that the person with whom he had to deal was a woman. "Your husband should have had the courage to send you to me," he added.

"My husband did not send me, Mr. Dungard," Nesta said, with gentle dignity. "He does not know that I have come. I came of my own accord to tell you the truth about our marriage. We were already married when he spoke to you about Winston's wife. His only fault was in concealing from you the fact of the marriage. He did not marry her in defiance of your wishes. Surely this will cause you to relent, to be more lenient with Winston."

"This may or may not be the truth, replied Horace Dungard, coldly. "I have little faith in the honesty of one who has Charles Marvin's blood in her veins."

Nesta quivered and flushed under the lash of his cruel words, but she replied, quietly:

"It is very easy to prove the truth or, what I have asserted. I have brought my marriage certificate——" he stopped her with a gesture.

"It makes no difference when Winston Dungard married you medium," he said. "That you are his wife is quite sufficient for me. If you married him in the hope of profiting by my wealth, you will be disappointed." At that moment the door from the hall opened quietly and Hammond stood upon the threshold. Neither Horace Dungard nor Nesta perceived him. "I have made a new will which I will sign tomorrow and in that will there appears no such name as Winston Dungard."

"I see that it is useless for me to appeal to you," declared Nesta. "You are cruel, pitiless, relentless. But it may be that you will not be able to carry out the act of injustice you contemplate."

Then turned, as she spoke, and went toward the door leading into the library bed room. A reaction had set in and she felt suddenly sick and faint. Everything was growing black before her as she made her way toward the door leading into the boudoir.

Hammond, with a discrete cough, came forward as Nesta disappeared.

"Mr. Brice wishes to see you, sir," he said.

Horace Dungard passed his hand wearily and a little bewilderedly over his brow.

"You can show Mr. Brice up," he said.

In a few moments Andrew Brice, Horace Dungard's lawyer, entered the room.

"I hope I am not disturbing you at this hour, Mr. Dungard," he said, "but the truth is, I find I have to leave town early in the morning to be absent two weeks at least. I thought that you would have you will to sign this evening."

"Very good," Horace Dungard answered. "I suppose my housekeeper and butler will answer for witnesses?"

"Yes, indeed."

The lawyer drew the will from his pocket, as Horace Dungard crossed the room and touched the electric button.

A few minutes elapsed before Hammond, when Mrs. Dungard's bell rang. Annie, the maid, found Gratia still in the boudoir and informed her that she was supposed to be from Madame Rene, was still with her, Hammond, and said, "but the truth

"Annie," said Gratia, "I want you to remain with me—certainly for the rest of the night."

"Do you mean here in the boudoir, ma'am?" asked Annie, trying not to appear surprised.

"Yes, in the boudoir," was the reply. "And, Annie, do not say anything of this to any one."

"No, ma'am," said Annie.

It was about half an hour later when Annie went down stairs. In the lower hall she met Hammond, the butler.

"How long is the young woman with Mrs. Dungard to remain?" he asked. "I want to close up the house and go to bed."

"You can close up the house now, if you wish," Annie replied. "There won't be any body going out tonight."

"Why, what's become of the young woman, Hammond inquired. "She certainly didn't go out this way."

"Perhaps she went by another way," said Annie, pertly, and then she ran on down the hall to prevent his questioning her further.

After the hall and house, Hammond went up to the library with a decanter of wine and a few biscuits ordered.

Horace was seated before his desk, writing. He looked up as the butler entered.

"Hammond, does any one besides Mrs. Morgan and yourself know of Mr. Brice's visit?" he asked, in the morning.

"No, sir, I think not," replied Hammond. "Very good, Hammond, say no one to know of it. I wish you would caution Mrs. Morgan tonight, if she hasn't retired."

"Very well, sir."

Horace Dungard bent again over his writing. The butler placed the decanter of wine glass on the desk and hurriedly left the room.

CHAPTER XV.

MURDERED.

Winston arrived home upon the following morning between eleven and twelve o'clock. His trip to Philadelphia had been unsuccessful, and he was pale, tired and harassed. He was beginning to feel very bitter against his brother. To have been allowed to see Horace, to plead with Horace and then to be cast upon his own resources seemed to him unjust in the extreme. It was cruel and unkind of his brother, possessed of millions, while he was penniless, with a wife and child dependent upon him.

He tried to look less dejected as he entered the cottage and went in search of his wife. He could not find her in any of the lower rooms and was on his way upstairs when he met the nurse with little Daisy in her arms.

"Papa! papa!" the little one cried, gleefully, and he bent and kissed her.

"Where is Mrs. Dungard?" he asked of the nurse.

"I don't know, sir," the girl replied. "And I am real glad that you have come for I was beginning to get worried about her."

"Why, what do you mean?" cried Winston.

"Mrs. Dungard went away last night, sir," the girl went on to explain, "saying she would return in a few hours, but she hasn't come back yet."

Winston turned pale.

"And has she sent no message of any kind?" he asked.

"No, sir, nothing."

"And she said nothing as to where she was going or for what purpose?"

"No, sir, only that it was something of importance that was taking her out. She sent me to call a cab and went out in it."

Winston, who was beginning to be seriously alarmed at his wife's unaccountable absence, turned and went down the stairs with the purpose of going in search of Nesta, though he had not the remotest idea where to look for her. He opened the front door and came face to face with Richard Dunting.

"Thank Heaven, you have returned," the latter exclaimed, and when Winston seen that he was very pale and evidently laboring under great agitation, he, himself, paled with dread. He felt instinctively that Dick had come to tell him something in regard to Nesta.

"What is it?" he asked, hoarsely.

"You must prepare yourself for a great shock, Winston," said Dick. "Your brother, Horace Dungard, was murdered last night."

"My brother murdered," repeated Winston, dazedly, while at the same time he was conscious of a feeling of relief. It was terrible—the news Dick had brought—but it did not concern his wife.

"There is more and even worse to come," Dick continued. "Summon all your fortitude to meet the blow, old fellow. Your wife is accused of having murdered your brother."

"You must be mad!" said Winston, with a ghastly laugh. "Nesta accused of the murder of my brother. That cannot be, it's impossible, impossible."

"I know that it must seem that way to you, old fellow," said Dick, pityingly. "But unfortunately, such is the case. It seems that last evening your wife went to the home of your brother for the purpose of interview with him, part of which was overheard by the butler. Afterward, for some reason which I did not learn, Mrs. Dungard remained all night in your brother's house. This morning when he was found dead in the library and the butler accuses your wife of having murdered your brother."

"Where is she?" asked Winston, with white lips.

"She is detained for the present, at your brother's house," Dick replied. "I have a carriage waiting for you. Come at once."

Winston turned mechanically back into the hall to get his hat. The nurse had come downstairs and gone into the parlor. Winston heard the patter of little Daisy's feet and her baby laugh, and shuddered. Then, with a sudden impulse, realizing that his white face might frighten the child, he went and joined Dick. The child sped them from the window and ran down the walk to the gate, in front of which was the cab, a number of men and boys around, though she beat upon the glass and called loudly to them.

There was a crowd about the house of Horace Dungard when the cab drove up to the door. Winston and Dick were regarded curiously as they left the cab and walked up the steps and to the front door. The door was opened by a footman. Winston entered and, like a man in a dream, ascended the stairs, followed by Dick. At the library door a policeman in plain clothes, stopped Winston.

"I have orders not to allow any one to enter this room," he said.

Winston stared at him as though he only half comprehended what he was saying.

"This gentleman is Mr. Dungard's brother," Dick explained and the detective, with a quick glance at Winston's pale, tense face, stepped aside. Winston opened the door and entered the room. Dick followed Hammond.

Hammond the butler, and one of Mr. Brice's clerks, who was putting seals upon the drawers of the desk, were the only persons in the room. Horace Dungard not yet arrived and nothing had been changed since his death.

Winston went straight up to the ghastly figure in the chair before the desk. The murdered man had been stabbed in the back and had fallen forward with his face upon the desk. A blood stain on the couch had formed a red pool upon the floor. The weapon with which the deed had been committed, lay upon the floor beside the chair where it had evidently been dropped by the murderer. It was a long, slender dagger, or stiletto, with a jeweled handle. Winston recognized it at once as the property of Mrs. Horace Dungard, his sister-in-law. She had bought it in Italy while on her wedding tour and had often had it seen it on a table in her boudoir.

Winston stood and for moments gazing upon the murdered man, then turned with a shudder to the left as he encountered the shrinking gaze of Hammond, and, remembering that Dick had told him that it was the butler who had overheard the row and the murder, he moved forward and laid his hand upon the man's shoulder.

"How dare you accuse my wife of that awful crime?" he cried. While he spoke, the door opened and the detective entered. "Answer me, how dare you bring such an accusation against a lady—against a woman who never had an evil thought of any one?" he added.

Hammond trembled and his lips quivered as he looked up into Winston's face, his pallor crossed by a lurid red streak.

"Mr. Winston, I—I—" he began, hesitatingly, but the detective stepped forward and laid his hand on Hammond's arm before he had time to say anything further.

"I would advise you and Mr. Dungard not to say a word in connection with this," he said. "It might be used against the accused, later."

"The accused?" repeated Winston. "I suppose you refer to my wife, but such an accusation is so preposterous, so utterly without foundation that——"

"My dear sir," the detective interrupted him, with a touch of impatience, "the accusation that has been brought against your wife is not without foundation. Of course if you are still determined to talk after my warning, I have no way of preventing you."

He turned away, and, as Winston stood motionless like a man turned to stone, Dick laid his hand on his arm.

"Come, Winston," he said, "come and let us go to your wife."

Winston started and then turned and followed Dick from the room.

As the door closed upon them, Hammond wrung his hands, while the tears rolled down his wrinkled cheeks.

"Oh, why did I do it? Why did I do it?" he moaned. "I have brought this awful sorrow upon Mr. Winston, whom I have loved since he was a curly-haired boy. For twenty years I have served the Dungards and Mr. Winston has never been anything but kind and good to me. I wish my tongue had been palsied before I spoke a word to injure him or his."

"I wouldn't take it so much to heart, if I were you," said the detective, not unkindly. "I don't think there is a doubt but that suspicion would have fallen upon the young woman, even if you had not accused her. If I am not mistaken the inquest will develop strong circumstantial evidence against her."

"That doesn't make me the less regretful that I was the first to accuse her," declared Hammond, with the utmost dejection. "And how could a woman," and he glanced shudderingly toward the ghastly figure of the murdered man, "commit so dreadful a crime?"

The detective smiled grimly. His experience had taught him that women were as capable of committing crimes as men, women as young, pretty and refined as Nesta Dungard.

In the meanwhile Winston held his wife in his arms, sick with shame, and she clung to him shrieking and moaning:

"Richard, take me home. Take me away from this dreadful place; take me home to my child. I want to go at once, as soon as they—they found him, but they wouldn't let me, they said I must remain here for the present. But now you have come you will take me home. I know now that I was wrong to come, but I did it for your sake, dear. I thought if I told him the truth he might relent. But he was hard and cold and cruel. But I must not speak of him like that now, for he is—dead. Who—who killed him, Winston? Do they know?"

"No, no, they do not know yet," Winston replied.

"It is all so awful," she went on, shudderingly. "But let us go, Winston. It's killing me staying here. And I want my child. Take me home, Winston."

And he was forced to tell her the truth, while her face changed from dazed bewilderment to stony horror.

At the inquest, held that afternoon, the circumstantial evidence against Nesta Dungard was so strong that she was held to await her trial for the murder of Horace Dungard.

CHAPTER XVI.

"MY HUSBAND BELIEVES ME GUILTY."

The funeral was over, and in the library were assembled Winston and Mary Dungard and the servants to hear the will signed by the dead man the night he met his death, Gratia was too ill to be present. The shock of her husband's awful death had completely prostrated her.

Mr. Brice seated himself, gave a glance about the room, cleared his throat and commenced to read the will.

After a bequest of one thousand dollars to his faithful servants, Mary Morgan and Hammond Smith, fifty thousand dollars to his old friend and lawyer, Andrew Brice, five hundred thousand dollars to different charities, five hundred thousand dollars to his sister, Mary Dungard, Horace Dungard left the remainder of his fortune, amounting to several millions of dollars, to his beloved wife, Gratia Dungard. Mary Dungard's share was to revert at her death to Gratia Dungard and any children that might be born to her. Should the aforesaid Gratia Dungard die without issue, one million dollars was to be expended in the building of a hospital for incurables, and the income from the residue to be used in maintaining it.

There was dead silence in the room for some minutes after Mr. Brice finished the reading of the will, broken at last by a suppressed sob from Mary Dungard. Mr. Brice motioned for the servants to leave the room. As the door closed upon them Winston turned to his sister.

"Mary, will you lend me enough money to outpay counsel in case of my wife?" he asked. "I am practically penniless and I know of no way to get any money."

"Oh, Winston, don't speak of my lending you money," cried Mary, bursting into tears. "You know that I am only too glad to give you as much as you want or require. I will go, Mr. Brice, to make me a deed giving you half of all that belongs to me."

Mr. Brice coughed apologetically.

"There is a proviso in the will preventing that, dear Mary," he said.

"Oh, I did not understand that," exclaimed Mary. "Surely my brother Horace has been so unjust as to have made such a will."

"You are very generous, Mary, but I do not want the half of your fortune," said Winston. "I only want sufficient to do all that can be done for my unfortunate wife. But for that I would not touch a penny of my brother's millions."

"I suppose I can give Winston money, Mr. Brice?" Mary asked.

"Oh, yes," the lawyer replied, suppressing a grim smile. It struck him as an irony of fate that the money of the murdered man should be used for the purpose of defending his wife's murderess. "There can be nothing urged against that legally."

After a lawyer had left, his departure and the brother and sister were alone, Winston said:

"Mary, I have another favor to ask at your hands, will you take charge of my little child for a time, at least?"

"Most gladly, Winston," Mary Dungard replied. "I was about to speak to you about it. Gratia, poor child, ill as she is, thought of your child and suggested that you bring it to me."

"She is very good, very generous," said Winston. "My poor little child at least is innocent."

Mary looked at him quickly.

"Winston," she said, in a low, half-scared voice, "do you believe your wife guilty?"

He shuddered and covered his face with his hands.

"God help me, how can I help believing it," he groaned.

It was true, he did believe his wife guilty of the murder of his brother. Black distrust had entered his heart and festered there. Reason triumphed over love and faith and trust. The blood was not yours before, when he stood a wondering, frightened child beside his sister's coffin, and looked from the white dead face to the stern, gloomy one of Horace Dungard, now here truth. He believed his wife capable, guilty of a crime because she had Charles Marvin's traitor blood in her veins. His brother's words had again and again recurred to him, "She has Charles Marvin's blood in her veins and would bring you sorrow as he did to all who loved and trusted him." While not consciously was his brother's relentless hatred of Charles Marvin, he had, in a way, become to a certain extent imbued with Horace Dungard's bitter feelings, and the same weakness in his character, that had deterred him from facing the consequences of his marriage, caused him to be powerless now to fight against the black doubt of his wife, though that doubt was untold agony.

Mary stood looking at him helplessly and pityingly as he sat with his face covered, shivering with pain. She had been unprepared to find that he believed his wife guilty, she was somewhat shocked, and could think of no words that might bring him even momentary comfort.

"Richard," she cried, "you are the only friend I have!"

It was the next day, when he went to visit his wife in her cell that Nesta Dungard's with the knowledge forced upon him the fact that her husband believed her guilty. And this knowledge brought with it a certain calmness—the calmness of despair.

"Go, Winston," she said, "go, and leave me to my fate. Whatever that may be, it can hardly be so great a suffering than I am enduring at this moment.

"If I die in my innocence, may God forgive me for I can never forgive myself."

When he left her she sank upon her cot, suddenly feeling very weary, but still strangely calm.

Then, perhaps an hour later when Richard Dunting was shown into the cell.

She rose slowly to her feet and faced him.

"Why do you come here?" she asked.

He looked at her half-wonderingly, half-reproachfully.

"How can you ask me that?" he replied. "Am I not your friend?"

"Do you not believe that I killed Horace Dungard?"

"My God! how can you ask me such a question as that?" he cried. "I am no more capable of believing you guilty of that crime than—than your husband himself."

She smiled in a way that frightened him.

"But my husband believes me guilty," she said, quietly.

"Impossible!" he cried, incredulously. "You are laboring under some strange delusion."

"No, it is the truth." Then suddenly that stony calmness gave away. "Richard, Richard," she cried, holding out her hands to him, "you are the only friend I have in the world, since even my husband believes me guilty."

And then as he took her hands gently in his, she clung to him and burst into wild weeping.

This dramatic story will be concluded in next week's Ledger. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly advised to send in the coupon for subscription at once. If you do so, we will be glad to send you free one of our fine stereotypes or any six patterns you may select from our remarkable offer of autumn patterns. Look at our advertisements on pages thirteen and fifteen.

HIS TELEPHONE SWEETHEART.

BY CARRIE GRAHAM.

According to the rules and regulations of the telephone company, an operator has no right to listen to conversations over the wires in her charge, but sometimes Edna could not help hearing snatches of a conversation when she tested to see whether some one in one of the booths was still talking.

Naturally, too, she became interested in the young man who always called one address uptown.

His first name was Frank, that much she knew, and she knew also that he worked in the big office building in which she operated the public station switchboard.

Most offices had their own wires and the work was tight, so gradually she began to take especial interest in Frank and his calls. Her own lonely little life contained no romance and she entered heart and soul into this stranger's love affair.

Every day on his way in from lunch and again in the evening he called up Uptown. It was the only name he ever used, and Edna wished that sometime some one might talk to her like that, whether it was over the wire or face to face.

She loved to hear some one like Frank, with laughing, brown eyes and a jolly smile which seemed apparent in her hungry heart took to itself the tender message she heard over the wire, when she deliberately cut in.

She had some share of his visits, for he had always a pleasant smile and a "good afternoon" for her, but she wanted more. She used to whisper very softly her own answers to his tender messages and she was genuinely distressed when, some months later, the messages were discontinued.

She still looked for the pleasant greetings at he passed her desk and wondered that he should take his disappointment so well. She almost planned to call up the old number and pretend that it was a mistaken call just to see if the girl was still there.

Then there were certain times when she was selfishly glad that the calls had stopped, for she was jealous of his telephone sweetheart and now occasionally he stopped for a word or chat with her.

Then, one afternoon there came the call. She recognized the voice instantly and her generous spirit rose superior to her selfish jealousy and without thinking she laughed into the receiver.

"I'm so glad you're back," she cried, then the voice at the other end recalled her to her duty. For the first time she knew his last name, for the caller asked that Mr. Frank Howard be sent for and gave the number of his room.

Presently he came down in the elevator, his face beaming with gladness, and Edna forgot down a desire to listen. She wanted to know that he had won back his telephone sweetheart and yet she could not bear to learn the fact.

Howard came out of the booth with an old look about his face. There was no one there besides the girl and he leaned against the desk.

"What did you mean by saying that you were glad?" he demanded curiously. Edna's face grew red.

"Did you say that?" she asked.

Howard nodded.

"She wanted to know what you were glad about. She thought at first she had the wrong number."

"I was glad that she had come back," explained the girl. Somehow those brown eyes compelled the truth.

"You called her for so long I knew that you had quarreled and I was glad that you had made it up so soon."

"Been scenting a romance?" he said with a smile. "She's been my sweetheart ever since I was old enough to love any one. She's been out of town. Just got back and wanted to call me."

"I'll bet you're glad!" "It was not a brilliant remark, but it was the best she could do. Howard smiled.

"I bet you are," he agreed, "You see I don't go home until late and she's all alone, so I call her up to cheer her."

"That's all?" she asked Edna (a dismay. Howard shook his head.

"That's my brother," he said with a laugh. "She's the best sweetheart a man ever had. I was going to take her home with me the night law class comes to an end next week, and after that I want to take you up to see her."

"Me? What for?" Edna's eyes grew large.

"I've been telling her a lot about you," exclaimed Howard. "She said that she'd went away that she wanted to meet you when she came back and I told her that I would try and get you to come up. Will you come?"

"Sure," said Edna, felling her conventional limitations, but too startled to give expression to her feelings. "I will love to her voice that she's an awfully nice person. You learn to tell voices when you hear so many of them over the wire."

"I'm glad you like her," said Howard simply. "Yes I want you to like each other. Do you think you will?"

You mean—" Edna did not complete the sentence, but Howard understood.

"Just that," he agreed.

"I guess I do—now," confessed the girl, "because I was awfully jealous of your telephone sweetheart."

FEET OUT

She Had Curious Habits.

When a person has to keep the feet out from under the cover during the coldest nights in winter because of the heat and prickly sensation it is time to quit coffee, which causes the trouble, he let off.

There is no end to the nervous conditions that coffee will produce. It shows in one way in one person and in another way in another. In this case the habit was tied in S. Dak. She says:

"I had to get up and walk the floor with my feet and limbs out of the bed on the coldest nights, and felt afraid to sleep for fear of catching cold. I had been troubled for years with twitching and jerking of the limbs, and for most of the time I have been unable to go to church or to lectures for fear of the awful feeling that I must keep on the move.

"When it was brought to my attention that coffee caused so many nervous diseases, I concluded to drop coffee and use Postum Food Coffee to see if that trouble was caused by coffee drinking.

"I made a fresh one cup of coffee for breakfast, but that was enough to do the business for me. When I quit it my troubles disappeared and the nervousness went away. Now I have no more of the jerking and twitching and can sleep in any season without holding over me and sleep all night in sound, peaceful rest.

"Postum Food Coffee is absolutely worth its weight in gold to me." "There's a Reason." Sold by grocers in two sizes, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

A Guileless Scholar.

A well-known professor remarked that the passion for any science may make a man hopelessly narrow, in a way. As an example he cited the case of a certain deeply professor in Middletown, Conn., whose love for philology was so excessive that it frequently led him to discredit the broader principles of language in his minute researches for particular kinds of an ordinary English word to its Aryan or Sanskrit ancestor.

Once a student thought to have a bit of fun at the learned professor's expense. Assuming an air of great modesty he rose.

"Doctor, I've been thinking a great deal of late about the derivation of the word 'Middletown.' What is your idea of it?"

The professor was a bit taken back. "Really," he stammered, "my eye—really, young man, that is a subject that will require much reflection. May I ask whether you have chanced upon anything that would throw any light on the question?"

"It is my firm belief, sir," responded the student, with great gravity, "that Middletown is derived from *Mussel*."

"Dear me, dear me!" exclaimed the guileless professor. "And pray, sir, how do you derive Middletown from Mussel?"

"Very easily, doctor," replied the joker; "by dropping 'ones' and adding 'iddle-town.'"

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The Ledger employs no traveling agents to solicit subscriptions, and every person working in that capacity is a fraud. No person is authorized to take subscriptions for the Ledger unless he or she has been in the employ of the company or has been appointed agents to sell this paper. Subscribers will confer a favor by reporting to us any fraud that will enable us to expose and arrest said persons as are now traveling from town to town in different sections of the country, claiming to be agents of the Ledger and thereby defrauding the people. Beware of strangers.

Secretary Taft is going away, but he'll be back.

Kindly observe the powers studying, with their fingers crossed, how to disarm.

That baby boy who was born on a limited train certainly started in early to lead a fast life.

Speaking of panics, the Standard Oil Company has declared another slim quarterly dividend of $6,000,000.

There is but one thing on the face of the earth worse than a woman gossip, and that is a male gossip.

Russia and Japan have now concluded their treaty, very consoling refreshments from dividing up China between them.

It is thought that the Chicago Coliseum is large enough to hold the Democratic convention. Not the Democratic party. Oh, dear, no!

When King Edward receives the largest diamond in the world or a present will he think that the iceman is making his regular delivery?

Doubtless some of the Pennsylvania boodlers who are to be prosecuted are beginning to fear greatly for the foundations of our Government.

Mr. Harriman says he would like to own all the railroads in the United States. Ha! That was what he was at, was it, when the Government caught him?

Chicagoans who have died since April 1 are to be taxed on their personal property precisely as if they had not died. This, however, does not worry them at all.

Russian editors who have been forbidden to mention the czar except by special permission might put in a couple of dashes when they have occasion to allude to him.

By sitting on a carpet tack a man supposed to be incapable of speech was restored to speech. We have often heard this action recommended as an enlarger of the vocabulary.

Our navy is now second in the percentage column. When Mr. Rockefeller sends in his check for the full amount we might throw together a few more warships and capture the pennant.

When science has been able to project its eye further into space we may discover that the comets which infest the skies are simply big "rockets" sent up by some populace inhabiting one of the larger planets.

That New York judge who says that woman is the real boss undoubtedly has met woman at close range. No one but a man who had been married one or more times could have such a true insight into human relationship. All married men know it, but few of them will admit the truth. They do their best to keep up the bluff when any one is looking, but all except unmarried men know that they are bad actors.

LOVE AND VILLAINY.

A STORY OF THE RANCH LANDS. BY THOMAS P. MONTFORT.

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CHAPTER XVII.

MIND READING.

For three or four days after the events just described, Daniels remained close in doors, and very little was seen of him about the ranch.

He was not assured that Abe had not told about what had taken place at their last meeting, and, fearing that he had, he had two reasons for wanting to keep out of sight.

He did not know so much about cowboys and their erratic ways, but he felt confident from what he did know that they had no use for an assassin. He thought it more than likely, too, that if they did know of his attempt on the life of Arnold resent it on general principles and in a way that would end in his swinging at the end of a rope. For these reasons he felt that it would be better for him to temporarily exclude himself from public gaze as much as possible.

Then again, even if Abe had told nothing more, Daniels was sure he had told about the blocking incident, and while this interference was not dangerous he with his cowboys it certainly would be mighty humiliating.

So he kept as much out of sight as possible, but he did not fail to avail himself of every opportunity to be near to Miss Clyde. He was with her every chance he had, and he made note that her mood was remarkable for its warmth and earnestness.

His advances were received by her in a manner that gave him great hope. She did not promote him above Arnold, on the other hand, she did not repel him. Her manner was that of one who was wavering on the point of surrender. He had proposed and she had not rejected him, and when he urged an immediate marriage she had not answered him either "yes" or "no."

He counted the victory as good as won, so finally he became more insistant, and said that they must not delay, but must marry at once.

"My interests are such as to demand it," he said, "and you must delay none such circumstances."

"I am sorry," she replied, "but I can't marry you at once. In fact, I can not do it under thirty days."

He gave a start and looked at her sharply, but her face was a picture of perfect innocence. Her words were so agropos that they fitted him with alarm, but the next instant he felt assured that they had a hidden meaning. He was confident that her reference to thirty was not accidental.

However, her hurried appearance reassured him, and at last he persuaded himself that her words meant nothing. On second thought he could not see how they could have any hidden meaning. She could not know of his scheme—could not even know of the will.

So he gradually recovered from his fright, and his courage returned and his heart again beat regularly.

"I do not see," he said, "why it is necessary for us to delay our marriage. Why could you not wed me now just as well as a month from now?"

"Oh," she replied, "there is no use of any haste, so far as I can see."

"But there is," he protested. "I have told you that my business interests demand it."

There was a queer smile on her lips which he saw, but did not understand. He thought she was pleased at his insistence, and he half way made up his mind that she was only pleading to delay so as to win her by her consent. He had understood that women were created like that, and that it was their nature to make a man think they were hard to get.

"Your business interests," she repeated presently. "Yes, I believe you did mention that as your reason."

"I did. And they are important."

"They must be."

"They are very important."

"No doubt."

"Certainly. Do you think they are not?"

"Most assuredly I don't. Have I intimated anything of the kind?"

"No."

"Then why do you ask such a question?"

"I rather thought from your tones and manner that you had some doubts."

"Then you were entirely mistaken. I have no doubts at all as to the importance of your business interests."

"I am glad to know it. But perhaps you do not realize just how important they are."

"No?"

"I think you do not, or you would not ask for any delay."

"Probably not."

"I am sure of it."

"Perhaps you might tell me just how important they are."

"Well, it means a good many dollars."

"Does it?"

"Assuredly."

"Five hundred, or a thousand?"

"That is nothing."

"Oh, isn't it?"

"No."

"Then it must be ten thousand?"

"A great deal more than that."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Mr. I did not know you were as rich as all that."

"Didn't you?"

"No."

"Well, perhaps there are several things about me that you do not know."

"No doubt of it."

"And there may be a good many little surprises in store for you."

"There may be. But——"

"But what?"

"Oh, nothing."

"You started to say something?"

"Yes, I started it."

"Well, what was it?"

"Oh, I was just thinking that we never know just how much people do know about us."

He looked at her narrowly for an instant, but his equanimity nightly disturbed.

"I am afraid," he said, "that I don't exactly understand your meaning."

"Don't you?" she asked.

"I think not."

"Well, I only made a general observation. I guess, if the truth was known, people are not as well acquainted with one another's lives and histories than we think."

He was still disturbed and uneasy. The drift of her remarks did not seem to be altogether what he most desired. Still, there was that hurried explanation on her features, and her manner was certainly impenetrable.

"That may be," he replied with forced disinterestedness. "But it has nothing to do with the matter of our marriage."

"No?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, perhaps it hasn't."

"The question is, are you willing to lay aside your scruples and marry me now, in order that my business interests may not suffer?"

"I understand."

"Then, well, you do that much for me? It is not much to ask, is it?"

"No, not so much. But you have not told me how my business interests would suffer."

"Oh, a great deal."

"Indeed! Let me see if I can't guess just how much. You see I am something of a mind-reader."

She looked very hard at him, and he flinched and squirmed under her steady gaze, and every second seemed an hour. He did not believe that she had any power to read the thoughts of others, but yet she felt that she was reading every secret of his soul, and especially that one secret which he was so anxious to keep hidden from her. At last she said:

"Let me see. In the first place I read a secret that you are keeping from me—something which you do not want me to know, not just yet. In fact not for thirty days."

He flushed scarlet and began to tremble. Apparently taking no notice of his embarrassment she went on:

"I read, too, a large sum of money. It is very large. And that is the sum you are afraid of losing if you do not hear from it. In money and property there is two—hundred-thousand dollars."

It was as though a bomb had bursted under his feet. He was too much astonished to utter a word, and he could do nothing but sit there, staring and grasping, and the floor on which the earth had suddenly slipped from under him.

Directly she bursts into a peal of merry laughter, and shook her finger at him.

"I know from your looks that I guessed it, sir. You seem very surprised," she said. "You did not believe I could do it, did you?"

All he could do was to shake his head. He could not have uttered a word to save his life.

"That is a large sum to lose," she went on presently, "and I do not wonder that you are anxious. It is a large sum for people like us."

She paused an instant, but he remained silent, then thoughtfully she added:

"But there is a queer coincidence in all this. Don't you what it is?"

He nodded his head.

"If you don't marry me within thirty days you will lose two-hundred—thousand dollars, while if you do marry me I'll lose exactly the same amount."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A PAINFUL TALK.

Abe had debated with himself what to do with that letter. He had decided at once that Miss Clyde should have it. He experienced no hesitation on that point, it was too good an opportunity to get even with her by humiliating her; and, at the same time, he was capable of taking a higher view of the matter.

As a man of honor it was his duty to warn her of the scheme that had been hatched up against her.

He should give her the letter, but the question he debated was how he should go about it.

If he entrusted it to some one to hand it to her the probabilities were that everybody at the ranch would become familiar with its contents, and Miss Clyde would be talked and laughed about by the commonest cowboys. As much as he wanted to humiliate her, he revolted at the idea of her suffering humiliation in the sight of others.

If he took the letter to her himself he did not know how she would receive him. She might thank him, and again she might resent his interference in her affairs and upbraid him for taking the liberty of reading other people's letters. In that case he would suffer a humiliation that would be hard to bear.

However, only these two courses seemed to be open to him, and at last he decided on the latter. After all, he preferred to risk a little humiliation for himself rather than the possibility of hurting others.

So he waited and watched for an opportunity to present the letter to her when she was alone. He was next day after the reading of the letter the opportunity came.

She was sitting alone on the porch a short distance from the ranch, reading a book. The cowboys and Anderson were all away on the range. Mrs. Anderson was out in an afternoon sleep. Daniels was in his room, unsuccessfully writing letters.

Abe walked out to the knoll, and, holding the letter in his hand, said, with stiff and exact politeness:

"I hope you will pardon me, Miss Clyde, for interfering in your affairs, but I think I have something here that you ought to see. It is not my affair, nor my wishes, but it means so much to you that I think I have a perfect right to know its contents. For your own sake I hope that you will read it."

Without a word she held out her hand for the letter and he gave it to her. She looked at the address on the envelope but did not go further. Very quietly and coolly she said:

"This is Mr. Daniels' letter, and I do not see that you or I have any right to read it."

The rebuke contained in her words and tones was keen, but none the less it was cutting. Abe felt it and winced, but he did not seek to hide from her the fact that he understood.

"Ordinarily," he said, "I should agree with you that I had done wrong in reading that letter. But circumstances are peculiar. In some instances anything is fair. My dealings with Mr. Daniels are one of those instances."

"Perhaps," she answered. "But your dealings with Mr. Daniels doesn't concern me in the least, you know."

"I do not for an instant presume that it does, Miss Clyde. But his dealings with you, or rather with one who are interested, should be a matter of more or less concern. I should think."

"I am not aware, Mr. Hostetter, that he has any dealings in any matter that is of the least interest to me."

"Perhaps not. But there are a good many things of which we are not aware. If you will do me the trouble to read over that letter I am sure you will discover an instance of that kind."

"I might—if I took that liberty."

"As I did sir?"

"If you did, yes."

"Very well. Do as you please. As for myself, I have no apology to make to you."

"None are required, I assure you—at least not from me."

"Then we are still receive any, I am very certain."

"That is a matter that doesn't concern me, I think."

"Not in the least."

She rose as she said he waited a long time. Finally he said:

"Miss Clyde, I presume you neither seek nor desire any advice from me, and perhaps you bitterly resent my officiousness in meddling with your affairs, but I will take the liberty to beg you to read that letter. For your own sake, and for the sake of your future welfare and happiness I ask you to do this. And if you do not you will certainly regret it. You will believe me or not, as you please, but what I say to you is true."

"Thanks for your interest," she answered. "I am not in the habit, however, of reading other people's letters."

He whirled on his heel and started away. He had received just such a reception as he expected.

He was angry. Angry with her for her treatment of him, and angry with himself for being fool enough to submit himself to it. When he had taken a few steps he stopped suddenly and said over his shoulder:

He noticed that she abruptly turned her face away and drew her hand quickly across her eyes. He did not see, however, that her eyes were wet, and that there were tears on her cheeks.

If he had seen these things, and had known the cause, a great misunderstanding would have been cleared up then and there, and two hearts that were sad and heavy would have been filled with joy unspeakable. But he did not see, and in her pride she was glad that he did not. So the misunderstanding continued, and the two hearts remained

sad, and two lives were in a fair way to be blighted—and all for a little false pride.

Coldly, and as one stranger might address another, he said:

"I sincerely beg your pardon for having annoyed you with my presence. You have the letter, and you can do as you please with it. Good day."

He stalked away, and she sat very proud and erect until he was out of sight. Then she dropped her head on her arm and broke into tears and sobs.

Oh, if he could only have seen her then, and known what was in her heart!

Finally she became calm, and then she deliberately took the letter out and read it.

CHAPTER XIX.
A SURPRISE.

The next day after his talk with Miss Clyde Abe was riding in from the range, when he met her and Danielsville canterlop along on their ponies. He was chagrined, but not at all surprised.

They were laughing and chatting and he noticed that Miss Clyde, especially, was in high spirits. They passed within a few feet of Abe, but he did not speak, and they took no notice of him.

When they had passed on he swore under his breath, and once more dwelt on the fickleness and perfidy of womankind.

"She did not read that letter," he thought, "and I was a fool of myself all for nothing. No doubt she gave it back to him and told him how I had brought it to her, and then they had laughed together about my gullibleness. From this time forth I will attend strictly to my own business, and if she is determined to act the fool she can go on and do it in her own way."

A little further on Abe came up with Shorty Brown. The latter fell in and rode along on Abe's side. Presently, pointing toward Daniels and Miss Clyde, who were still in sight, he remarked:

"I understand they are going to get married pretty soon."

"Well, if it suits them I reckon no one else has any right to object," Abe replied gruffly.

"Sure not. They are old enough to be their own bosses, I guess."

"Yes, and old enough to have some sense, I should think."

"That's so, too. I don't know much about either of them, but it certainly does seem that she is making a bad mistake. Daniels don't strike me as the kind of man a woman should tie to. He's what I'd call a cowardly sneak, and none of the boys have got any use for him."

Abe said nothing, and after a little, Shorty added:

"Daniels is just idle kind of man, it seems to me, who would ultimately end in being the chief figure in a lynching match if he stayed out here long enough. I can see that sticking out all over him."

"Very likely," Abe agreed.

"And another thing," Shorty went on, "he's just the kind of man to sneak around and take an underhanded advantage of a fellow. You can see that he is vindictive and unforgiving, and that if he has a grudge against a man he will never drop it until he has satisfied it. And he won't come out in the open and fight like a man, but will just wait, and watch his chances, till he can strike him in the back."

"Very likely," Abe repeated.

"And what Dick told us about that little episode over there, when you spit on Daniels, we have been expecting him to do you a turn some time when you wasn't looking, and, unless I'm very much mistaken, he's got it in for you yet. I wouldn't be surprised to hear at any time that he'd plugged you in the back, and I'd advise you to be sort of on your guard. He'll do you, sure, if he has a chance."

"Very likely," Abe said again.

Shorty looked at Abe in surprise.

"You take it cool enough," he said.

"Why should I take it otherwise?" Abe asked.

"Perhaps you don't believe what I say."

"I do believe it. In fact, I have the best of reasons for knowing it is all true."

"Then you ought to wake up and be on your guard."

"Oh, I'm never exactly asleep when he's around."

"Of course, if he attempted anything like that we'd soon fix him, but that wouldn't do you any good if he got you first."

"I am aware of that, Shorty. I know Daniels, and I know what is in his heart, but I am not afraid of him. But that will be all right. Who said they were going to marry?"

"Well, nobody has said so, exactly, but he has given out that impression."

"What does she say?"

"Nothing, so far as I know. Mrs. Anderson, I hear, asked her about it, and she didn't deny it nor say it was no neither."

"Humph!"

"But I did see a queer thing the other night, Abe, and it was something I couldn't quite understand."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, Miss Clyde was settin' at her open winder, and I come up on her sort of sudden and unexpected. I was kind of creepin' and sneakin' nor nothin' and what I saw I couldn't help."

"I know."

"Well, there she set lookin' at a picture, with her eyes full of tears, and, blame me if she didn't raise the picture to her lips an kiss it."

"Humph!"

"Yessir, she done that identical thing."

"Well, I don't see that there was anything very remarkable in that."

"No, so far there wasn't."

"So far! What do you mean?"

"Kissin' the picture wasn't much, in itself, but—well, the picture was a man, and it wasn't Daniels."

"No?"

"No."

"Well, it might have been a relative—her father or a brother or something."

"It might have been, but it wasn't."

"How do you know it wasn't?"

"I've got eyes, haven't I."

"I think so."

"I can see things, can't I?"

"No doubt of it."

"And I'm capable of knowing what I see, ain't I?"

"I guess you are."

"Then I know what I say is true. That picture wasn't Daniels, and it wasn't her father, and it wasn't no relative."

"How can you know that when you never saw her father nor any of her relatives?"

"It wasn't necessary for me to have seen them to know that it wasn't them."

"How else could you know?"

"Blasted kind."

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

"Then I'll tell you. I have seen the man whose picture it is."

"Oh, I see."

"Simple enough, ain't it?"

"Sure."

"And now comes the queer part. Whose picture do you suppose it was?"

"I haven't any idea."

"It was yours."

CHAPTER XX.
SHORTY TALKS.

That Abe was surprised goes without saying. That his heart gave a bound of joy was a blind thing to do, but it did.

The information he had just received was the last thing in which he would have expected. That she had had his picture, and that she cried over it and kissed it, that was something he could hardly realize, and presently he began to doubt. There was a large silence, then he said:

"Shorty," he said "you are mistaken."

"Am I?" Shorty replied.

"You must be."

"Well, I'm not."

"Such a thing couldn't be possible."

"Maybe it couldn't. But all the same it is."

"It must have been some other person's picture. It could not have been mine."

Shorty shrugged his shoulders. With a careless air he said:

"Oh, well, think it any way you please. When I know a thing I know it, though, and I'd take my oath any day that it was your picture—a man's the one you have."

Abe said no more but rode on in silence, his mind and heart in a tumult. If Shorty was right what a world of happy possibilities lay within his reach. Daniels was carrying over his picture and kissing it could have but one meaning.

It meant nothing more nor less than that she had not forgotten, and that she still loved him.

Could it be possible, he wondered, that such a thing could be, and that after all he had made a great mistake. Such a thing seemed too improbable to be entertained for a single moment.

Hadn't he carried her picture all these years, and hadn't he often and often, in the seclusion of his room, gazed at it for hours with hungry eyes, and kissed it over and over?

But still, that was different. He had always loved her, and no matter what misunderstood come between them. Yes, it was not his fickleness that had brought about all the trouble.

He could value her picture and kiss it, for he knew that she loved him first. But with her it was different.

He rode still about the matter, pro and con, when Shorty's voice disturbed him, by saying:

"I don't want to poke my nose in where it don't belong, Abe, but a feller naturally will feel an interest in certain queer things, and he can't help it. You know how that is, don't you?"

Abe nodded his head.

"Now," Shorty went on, "putting every thing together I have noticed across our minds that you and Miss Clyde know a good deal more about each other than you let on, and that there is something sort of secret and mysterious between you two."

Abe frowned but still said nothing.

"Of course it is all sort of guess work with us," Shorty continued, "but we have come to the conclusion that you have just used to be sweethearts, and that, for some reason or another, you had a misunderstanding, and bust up, and ain't never been able to get things fixed up no more."

Abe replied briefly.

"Course," Shorty added, "we may be all wrong, Abe, as I said, it is just guess work with us, but that's the conclusion we've come to. Now, I'm not a bit curious myself. Whatever the trouble was, and whoever was to blame, and all that, of course we don't know, but I do think that there was a misunderstanding of some sort."

"Suppose there was and things ble eyes on Shorty, cried angrily:

"And suppose all that is so! What is it any of your business, or anybody else's, I'd like to know?"

"It ain't any, I reckon," Shorty answered. "I just mentioned that we'd come to that conclusion, and I'm free to confess, I sure wantin' to poke my nose in where it don't belong."

"Then just have the kindness to keep it out of my affairs, if you please."

"Certainly, certainly."

"And I wish you would have the goodness to tell the others to mind their own business and not meddle with things that don't concern them."

"You had better do that yourself, I guess. It is not my affair, you know."

"Well, I shall certainly tell them, and it won't take me long."

"Just as you please, Abe. That's your business, and my nose don't belong in it."

They rode on in silence again, Abe frowning and angry, and Shorty offended and dignified.

Away back across the prairie Miss Clyde and Daniels could be seen cantering along, apparently having a most enjoyable time.

After a while Shorty broke the silence by saying:

"I am sorry you should look at things that way, Abe, for I didn't mean no harm in sayin' what I did. Fact is, we have all a right smart interest in the matter, and we thought if we could sorter find out just how the land lay we might be able to help bring about a kind of an understanding and fix matters up between you."

Abe made no answer, but the frown on his brow was less dark.

"Of course, it wasn't none of our business, just as you say," Shorty went on. "We knowed that. But we hated to see two people held' an miserable as you if it could be helped, and we knowed you two both were, so we 'lowed it would be a good idea for us to turn in and help you to git together."

"I am much obliged," Abe answered.

"Not at all. You see, after all, we was thinkin' mostly of Miss Clyde, and it was her happiness we was figgerin' on most. We all think a sight of her, and we stand ready to do anything that's calculated to make her happier. Still, we hate to see you lose out, and especially, we hate to see you lose to that Daniels. He's just a miserable sneak, er, and we ain't a grain of use for him in the world. None of us."

Abe was considerably mollified. While he did not want the boys to meddle in his affairs, he knew that they were prompted by the best of motives, and he could not help but appreciate their kindness. In more friendly tones he said:

"That is all right, Shorty. You all mean well, I know, and I am not in need of any help, and I am quite sure Miss Clyde is very well satisfied with the way they are."

"Then there is nothin' more to be said or done?" Shorty remarked.

"Not a thing."

They rode up to the ranch and dismounted, and with a sigh of regret Shorty turned away. Presently, however, he stopped to say:

"Beware of Daniels, Abe. Whatever you do, keep an eye on him."

This concluded what will be continued in the Ledger issue of next week. Do not miss the pleasure and satisfaction of reading this story to the end. If you are not already taking the Ledger regularly or if your subscription has expired we strongly advise you to subscribe at once and get the balance of this fine story, as well as numerous great and thrilling serials that are awaiting publication in this class of all story papers. If the reader would like one of our valuable stereoscopes or if you would like six standard pattern without cost, please note the announcement of these premiums on pages thirteen and fifteen.

Might Have Happened Here.

Chairman Knapp, of the Interstate Commission, told in New York the other day a French railway story.

"A Traffic Manager," he said, "came to the president of his line and exclaimed disconsolately:

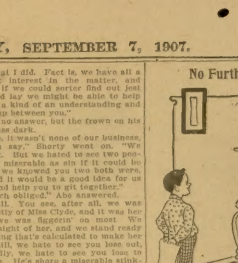
"'What are having no end of trouble with the public, sir, about those old dark blue cars. Everybody says they bump so frightfully in comparision with the new light blue ones, which, of course, run very smooth.'

"Humph," said the president, 'we must attend to this matter at once. Have all the old cars painted light blue immediately.'"

Reminders.

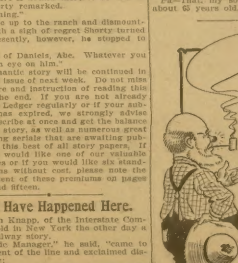
"Is your wife economical?"
"The worst ever! She keeps all my old love letters."

No Further Danger.



White—Pa, what does this mean: "He arrived at the age of discretion without having experienced any of the serious troubles of life."

Pa—That, my son, means a single man about 65 years old.



"Goin' to marry widder Jones, be ye? Can't see what he helped ye out. She drove her last husband to drink."

"Yep. That's just it."

Southwest

Success is largely a matter of *starting right*. Mr. Wright, whose letter we quote, started right—he went down into Oklahoma on the Rock Island-Frisco Lines and bought a farm.

He bought it *cheap*, because he got in *early*, when land in that section was held at a low price—before it was under cultivation.

There for four seasons have passed and Mr. Wright is reaping the reward of his labor and foresight.

He has worked *no harder* than he would have "back East"—*but* his land has worked with him—long-growing seasons, rich virgin soil, mild climate, these mean success for Mr. Wright.

He isn't snowed up five months in the year like he has *ten acres* of Oklahoma soil for every one he could possess in *York State*. Insurance.

Difference in values, yet the Oklahoma land is so much more productive—so much more profitable to own! The location explains the price—there are so many more people per acre in York State. In Oklahoma you have fewer neighbors, perhaps, but *more sunshine, more land, better crops, a brighter outlook.*

There are hundreds of favorable locations in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri, Arkansas and Louisiana adjacent to Rock Island-Frisco Lines where you can get in as Mr. Wright did and *get a start* on the road to independence.

Interested? You ought to be for the sake of your boys and girls, if not for yourself. *Write me to-day* and let me tell you fully about the section of the *Southwest* which most interests you. I'll send you an illustrated book of facts about it and tell how to visit it cheaply and *see it for yourself*. Just address

JOHN SEBASTIAN,
Passenger Traffic Manager Rock Island-Frisco Lines,
CHICAGO or ST. LOUIS,
Dept. H.

GUTHRIE, OKLA., JUNE 1, 1907.

MR. JOHN SEBASTIAN,
Chicago.

Dear Sir. As to the general thrifty condition in the locality, I am pleased to say that they could not be more flattering. Although we have been almost a failure in many of the older wheat growing counties, here it is exceptionally good. My farm lies about twelve miles south of Guthrie, and I have been living here for about four years. Texas and Kansas had their share of Oklahoma. I have 70 acres of wheat that will average twenty-five bushels per acre. My oats are good and the corn is also looking well. I have considerable alfalfa ready for second cutting.

All of these crops thrive here, and my neighbors report the same prosperous conditions.

Yours very truly,
J. H. WRIGHT.

Success!

Quite Right.

Teacher (to class in Shakespeare)—Now, Henry, what was the cause of Cleopatra's death?

Pupil—Indigestion.

Teacher (angrily)—Henry Perkins! What do you mean by giving me such an absurd answer?

Pupil—Well, anyway, she died because she had a bite before retiring.

The Wise Father.

"But I can't live properly on an allowance of $10 a week," protested the son.

"Of course you can," replied the father. "You want an increase so you can live improperly."

Woes of a Beginner.

Stubb—I heard that you went down to the rink to learn roller skating last night. Did you make an impression?

Penn—Oh, yes, the deepest dent you ever saw.

A Theory.

Mrs. Mater—I wonder what makes that dog so afraid of me? He always acts as if he thought I was going to half-kill him.

Little Daughter—I dess he's seen you 'pankin' me.

Mysterious Disappearances.

Guest—Waiter, I ordered cheese.

Waiter—Yes, sah; I brought it, sah. Right there, sah.

Guest—H'm! One little piece! Was that all you were given?

Waiter (anxious for the credit of the establishment)—They gen'ly give three or four pieces of cheese, sah. Maybe some of 'em got away.

Took Her Up.

Belle—I think Charley Brown is just horrid!

Estelle—What's the matter?

Belle—I bet him $5 on the election and lost and when I offered to pay him he accepted the money.

The Tramp's Request.

Lady of the House—You say you would like me to do a little sewing for you?

Tramp—Yes, mum; I have a button here, and if you would sew a shirt on it I would be much obliged.

Tripped.

Gunner—So you think the DeBlowers are faking about their extended European tour?

Guyer—I should say so. They said there were so many Americans in Venice that many had to walk in the middle of the street.

Gunner—Well?

Guyer—Why, the streets of Venice are canals.

Abnormally Sensitive.

"Awfully sensitive about trifles, isn't he?"

"I should say he is! Why, that man is so personally sensitive that he can tell if a single one of the 3,200 pores that fill the average inch of human skin isn't in working order."

In Self-Defense.

Brown—I met Short on the street this morning and struck him in self-defense.

Green—Why, how was that?

Brown—Before he had a chance to say a word I asked him to loan me a dollar.

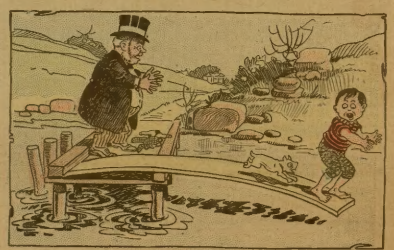
WHEN SHE TIPPED OVER.

"During my vacation," said L'Oignon, "I took lessons in sailing a boat."

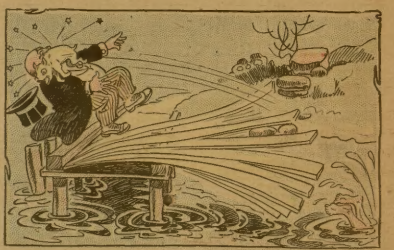
"And how did you make out?" asked Tete de Veau.

"Not very well with the boat, but I learned to swim beautifully."

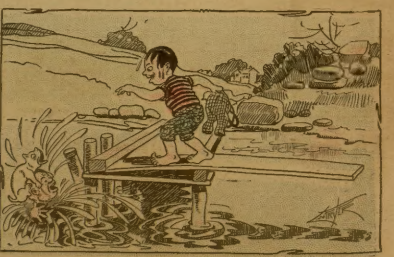
A QUICK RETURN.



No. 1.—Mr. Groucher—Sic 'em, Tige! Bite his legs! I'll teach the young rascal to swim off my dock!



No. 2.—(Splash!) "! ! !"



No. 3.—Bobbie Bubble—All right! Take ye, old dock, an' I hope yer enjoy th swimmin'. By, by!

A Poor Rule Then.

Elderly—Persevere, my boy, persevere! There's only one way to accomplish your purpose, and that is to "stick to it."

Youngfry—But suppose your purpose is to remove a sheet of fly-paper that you've sat down upon accidentally?

Flooring the Doctor.

Country Doctor (catechising)—Now, little boy, what must we all do to enter Heaven?

Boy—Die.

Country Doctor—Quite right; but what must we do before we die?

Boy—Get sick and send for you.

She Knows.

Gerald—It's queer how innocent Brown is. They say he never kissed any one in his life, and doesn't know how.

Geraldine—There's not a word of truth in it! He has—that is, he—why, I should think he would know how by this time.

Afraid of Guns.

Blinks—I thought Bluffer challenged you to a duel. You didn't weaken, did you?

Jinks—Not much. I accepted.

Blinks—What weapons?

Jinks—Guns.

Blinks—Eh? He's a dead shot! Wouldn't he fight?

Jinks—No. I chose old-fashioned muskets of the kicking variety, and he backed out.

More Nature Faking.

The ostrich, hotly pursued by the lion, stuck its head in the sand.

Instantly the lion stopped.

"I've chased all kinds of animated freaks in the jungles and on the plains," soliloquized the king of beasts; "but this is the first time, so help me, I ever saw a three-legged animal!"

Fearing a trick of some kind, the lion turned tail and fled ignominiously.

Tricks in Every Trade.

"Yes, he is the craftiest upholsterer in town."

"In what way?"

"Why, he reads all the marriage notices in the papers."

"Does?"

"Yes, and then goes around to the bride's parents and asks them if they want the parlor sofa upholstered."

Three Important Questions.

"What do you take when you are coming down with a cold?"

"Whisky."

"Wife object?"

"Certainly not. She doesn't want me to be sick."

"One more question."

"Well?"

"What's the easiest way to start a cold?"

AGENTS WANTED

Nearly all the readers of THE LEDGER will find these advertisements of interest to them. There will be found also many good openings and chances of making money by selling goods to friends, neighbors and others. Those seeking such an opportunity either as a regular or temporary occupation, should write the advertisers whose offers they like.

AGENTS GET $200

Wanted only one order a day for our high-class, medium priced, guaranteed tailor-made clothing, overcoats and trousers, will pay you a clear profit of $200 per month. Write for our liberal proposition explaining special tailoring system, which makes you get the orders. Large Sample Outfit to Everything Free. Standard Tailoring Co., Wholesale and Commission Tailors, 163 Harrison Street, Chicago.

WASHINGTON WORSTED & WOOLEN MILLS
Dept. 59 113 Adams St., Chicago.

JOLLITY

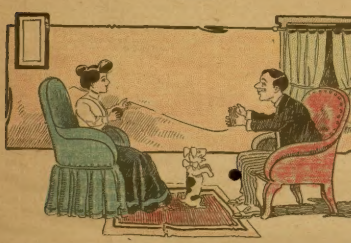
THE CRUCIAL MOMENT.

Within the hammock's net she swung,
So graceful and so fair,
Her arms above her head were flung
Lovely beyond compare.

He stood beside her for awhile,
Enchanted by her grace,
Till finally a blush and smile
He saw upon her face.

And then he heard her softly say,
First looking all about;
"Now please Fred, turn your head away.
I'm going to get out!"

ALAS!



No. 1.—This is the way Mr. Doveling used to help his wife when they were newly married.

No. 2.—And this is the way he does it now.

GETTING THERE.

Dunno how the world will go—
Whether right or wrong;
But ain't it just enough to know
It's goin' right along?
An' be the weather dark or fair,
Forevermore it's getting there!

The summers roses fade away,
An' sad seems plain an, bill;
But ever the blookest winter day
Dreams of the roses still.
An' sunny day or tempest drear,
The world's forever getting there!
—Atlanta Constitution.

"Stung" All Around.

The slangy proprietor came in unexpectedly and discovered a big shortage in the receipts of the day.

"Stung!" he gasped, turning pale.

"The bookkeeper is missing," hastened the pretty cashier.

"Stung by an adder!"

The smart waiter giggled behind his pyramid of dishes.

"Stung by an adder!" he chuckled. "Gee! we'll have to call the new Cleopatra after this."

And now the smart waiter is hunting a job.

THE FATAL TOUCH.

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.
One touch of humor makes the whole world grin;
One touch of pathos makes us brothers, every one.
But one "touch" for money makes the whole world run.

Strong Proof.

Sam Sunflower—Do yo' remembah big Bill dat cum f'um Gawga? Well, I think de po' fellow's mind must hab gone wrong.

Pete Persimmon—What makes yo' think so?

Sam Sunflower—Why, I saw him in a sto' buying a book entitled: "How to Eat a Watahmelon."

Sandy's Little Joke.

"Say, pard," whispered Gritty George, from the end of the line, "dey say dis here judge used to be a specialist who cured deafness."

"Dat so?" laughed Sandy Pikes. "Well, den he certainly ought to give us all a good hearing."

AGENTS WANTED

Nearly all the readers of THE LEDGER will find these advertisements of interest to them. There will be found among them some excellent chances of making money by selling goods to friends, neighbors and others. Those seeking such an opportunity either as a regular or temporary occupation, should write the advertisers whose offers follow.

SALESMEN.

Men who possess selling ability can put the most fer it by representing us for the sale of our popular policies of accident and health insurance. Experience not essential. Exclusive territory and active co-operation given to hustlers. Excellent openings and liberal terms for agents, collectors and district managers. Address, at once,

Dept. 78, CONTINENTAL CASUALTY COMPANY, CHICAGO, ILL.

$8 Paid for 100 for Distributing Samples of Washing Powder. Send 2c stamp. A. W. SCOTT, DOVER, N. J.

AGENTS, CREDIT, Perfumes, Flavors, etc., Big Money making. Express Paid. Premium Plan. Mfrs. PERMANENT AGENCY CO., Box 201, Station L, New York.

AGENTS WANTED to sell potato baskets with name and photo on handle, write for terms. Morgan Factory, Morris, Ill., P. O. Box 3.

AGENTS PORTRAITS 25c, FRAMES 15c, sheet pictures 1c, stereoscopes 25c, views 1c. 30 days credit. Samples and catalog free. **Consolidated Portrait Co., 265-267 W. Adams St., Chicago.**

SELL TOBACCO AND CIGARS Locally or Traveling; salary or commission. Full time or side line. Steady work. Good pay. Experience unnecessary. Address ROBSTOCK TOBACCO WORKS, Box U 13, DANVILLE, Va.

$125 to $250 a Month Salary and Expenses. Position permanent. Sell well known and reliable line of Stock Specialties. Exclusive territory. Write for particulars. Address, Dept. 1, THE E. A. STEDMAN CO., Jackson, Mich.

AGENTS $1
$250 a Month
Handle this wonderful 1907 Self-Heating Sad Iron and many other inventions. Write for Catalog, Free. Chas. A. Dey Supply Co., 133 So. 10th St., Phila., Pa.

$3 a Day Sure Men to canvass for local trade; we will show you how to make $3 a day absolutely sure. We buy from you and help you sell to the consumer. Write us today for our plan and we will explain the business fully; remember we guarantee a clear profit of $3 for every day's work, absolutely sure. Write today. ROYAL MANUFACTURING CO., Box 1016 Detroit, Mich.

Why Not Be a Sign Man?

$2000 a day easily made by selling our sign letters for office windows; also Transparent glass signs. If you are ambitious and desirous of making big money, we'd be glad to hear from you. Write for our free book and full particulars. No experience is necessary. You will start good right from the start. Write today for a free sample and full particulars.

Metallic Sign Letter Co., 71 N Clark St., Chicago

MAGIC BILL BOOK!

An entertaining and useful trick that can be used as an ordinary pocket book, or bill book. Quickly mailed 15c.

AGENTS WANTED.

W. C. WATKINS & CO., Box 1505, Pittsburg, Pa.

When answering advertisements you will favor the advertiser and the publishers by mentioning The Chicago Ledger.

FREE OUTFIT OF 6 ARTICLES to AGENTS

Thousands of men and women, many without previous experience, are making $2.50 to $5.00 per day selling our attractive line of Household Specialties. Every article is a household necessity, is warranted, and can constantly be depended upon to please the purchaser. Our proposition, made of best material, gives satisfaction to the housewife, leaves ready sale the next round and gives liberal profits to agents.

Here's the Outfit of 6 Articles You Get Absolutely Free

No. 1, Self-Sealing Pie Tin, 8½c—Seals itself; both crusts firmly together around edge of pie; prevents juices running out and burning; bake pie right on table cloth.

No. 2, Perfection Cake Tin, 12c—Indestructible; cake comes to remove from tin with ease; bakes even and brown.

No. 3, Combination Strainer, 15c—Strains, skims, drains, mixes and measures; made of tinned steel; will last a lifetime. Worth more than $1 to any family.

No. 4, Rapid Potato Masher, 25c—Made of steel, with wire loop handle; mashes potatoes in half the time required by old way.

No. 5, Favorite Cake Spoon—for measuring and mixing batter of all kinds; holds exactly two ounces.

No. 6, Clean Cut Tin, 10c—Is made of tinned steel with a keen, sharp edge; cuts cleanly and smoothly without a crease or fold.

SPECIAL OFFER Send us $3 cts., to pay cost of packing, etc., with your name and address, and the above outfit of six different useful kitchen utensils, which will be sent you at once, all charges prepaid. Remember, this is a high grade, well known and advertised household outfit, sold by us for years at 50 cents per set. We are willing to lose money on this first sale, in order to get you started as our agent, and we know that after you have shown the goods to your friends and neighbors, and have seen how easily you can make money selling them, you will be glad to send us $5 for a full line, of which we are the largest manufacturers in the U. S.

When you receive the goods, if they are not entirely satisfactory and strictly as represented, send the whole outfit back at our expense, and your money will be refunded.

We make this liberal offer to increase our number of active workers, and to introduce our line of goods. If you are not one of them, and if you have never tried to sell goods before, we want you to try us this time, for you will certainly find this easy and very profitable employment.

The outfit weighs and may be sent by mail.

When writing, mention our Special Offer No. 43.

HOUSEHOLD NOVELTY WORKS
25 Randolph Street, Chicago, or Buffalo, N.Y.

BIG MAIL FREE

Would you like to get a lot of letters, circulars and packages? You probably know that manufacturers supply houses, wholesalers and publishers buy names and addresses for the purpose of sending samples, advertising matter, papers and circulars to. Good names and addresses are hard to get and are quite expensive. We publish an Agents' Directory List containing names and addresses carefully arranged in alphabetical order. We send these Directory Lists to concerns we know are anxious for good names to send advertising matter to. Write your name very plainly so the printer will not make a mistake; be sure to give your street number and town also plainly written so that any mail addressed to you will reach you without fail. We have been publishing the Agents' Directory List for several years and refer to the editor of this paper who will tell you we are reliable. All we ask is that you send 10 cents in silver and we will enter your name in our Agents' Directory List as above stated. Write today. Address

AGENTS' DIRECTORY LIST,
INDIANA, INDIANA COUNTY, PA

THE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER;

Or, THE MARKED COIN. By ANNIE BROWNLEE.

[Copyright by W. D. Boyce Co.]

Begun in No. 31, August 3. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XXIV.

RED FOX GROWS THREATENING.

The following morning, after an unusually early breakfast, the members of the camp grouped together to lay plans for the day, and if possible to decide on some plan to obtain an audience with Mr. Blake and the beautiful Mildred.

"You advise me to see Red Fox?" Mr. Golden asked, addressing the gray-visaged old hunter.

"I vote that we go in a body and demand an interview," was the reply.

"It won't succeed," Doctor Hamilton said, thoughtfully. "Red Fox is Mr. Blake's friend, and he believes me to be his enemy. We'll receive scant courtesy at his hands," he added with a smile, half-sad, half-bitter.

"We can try at least," Mr. Golden said in reply. "If that fails we must devise some means of seeing them," he added, his face will asserting itself, and the lines about the strong, stern mouth growing deeper.

"That's easier said than done," the old guide said. "Had the ones sought been other than Mr. Blake and his daughter, I believe we would have little trouble in interviewing them; but Mr. Blake has been so thoroughly the Indians' friend that they won't give him up unless it's his wish to be given up."

"I'm for setting out at once," said the banker. "We'll know the sooner what to expect."

"That's so," said the old guide. The boat was made ready, and the five set out across the bay to the village of the Ojibways on the shore of Lake Nipissing. The hour was early, and the row across the bay in the clear morning air, was exhilarating. Their spirits rose as they neared the village, which lay basking in the early sunshine with no living creature visible.

"Red Fox and his braves must be napping this morning," the old hunter said,

When answering advertisements you will favor the advertiser and the publishers by mentioning The Chicago Ledger.

his eyes fixed upon the distant tents and canoes.

"Making up for lost time at the feast last night," the doctor responded, his face growing brighter and more hopeful as they neared the shore.

Suddenly, when they were about a quarter of a mile from the village, a canoe shot out from behind a rock, and came rapidly toward them.

"What does that mean?" asked the doctor, turning to the guide. "Red Fox is coming to meet us."

"If I'm not mistaken it means that Red Fox don't want us to land at his village, and is coming to tell us so."

"You think so?" the others said, their faces growing very grave.

"Yes, I do."

The Indians' canoe drew up within a few yards of them and stopped.

"Good morning, Red Fox!" the doctor said with an effort to be very cordial and impressive. "I hope you and your people are well this morning."

"Good morning, my brother!" the Indian replied, with a keen glance from his hawk-like eyes at the white faces in the boat. "Red Fox, the great chief, and his mighty people are well, and their hearts are light as the Singing Water."

"Ah, that is well," said the doctor, with his most lordly air. "I hope the White Lily and her father are well also?" His tone assumed a sharp edge as he gave Red Fox a look of the Indian calmly.

"Yes, the White Lily and her father are well. My brother, whose hair is like the snow, and whose heart is cold with age, will you stay with Red Fox and his mighty people in the village by the Great Water?" the Indian chief asked, his face cold as the village while casting a resentful, defiant glance at the strangers in the boat.

"These gentlemen are Mr. Blake's friends from far across the sea, and desire much to have us for our way to the village to see Mr. Blake and the White Lily. His brothers are anxious to see the White Lily and the moons since they parted." He picked up the paddle and turned the canoe.

A cunning light sprang into the Indian's eyes. "Red Fox is sorry to disappoint his brother that makes the good medicine, but his brother and the White Lily would be alone. Their hearts are sad and filled with trouble, and they came to Red Fox, who is always their friend, they will dwell for a lodge in the village of the mighty Ojibways. Red Fox has made them sad with so much fun and his braves will bring game from the forest, and fish from the Great Water, and the White Lily and her father will feast, and their hearts will grow glad, and they will dwell in the lodge of their brother forever." The Indian chanted, rather than spoke, and his eyes glowed like coals of fire.

The occupants of the boat looked at one another with something like dismay.

"Try to bribe him to allow us to see and speak with them here," Mr. Golden said.

The old guide shook his head. "It's no use. Red Fox is too staunch a friend to the people to be tempted by money."

"I've a mind," the doctor said thoughtfully, "to demand an interview."

"It seems the only thing left," the banker said in deep perplexity.

"It will at least show us what stand the Indians intend taking," Mr. Golden said, a thoughtful frown on his strong, resolute face.

"What do you advise, Villeneuve?" the doctor asked.

"Well, I reckon it'll not do any harm, and he caused redskins will have to say something."

"Here goes, then," he said, his face settling into stern determination.

"Red Fox, my brother," the doctor and the White Lily that their brothers from far away will come to their village to hour before the full sun power. He will tell them that their brothers' hearts are sad at the loss of their friends, that their friends have much to tell them; then their hearts will be glad." He ceased, and awaited the decision, assuming an air of great importance.

Red Fox and his braves held a consultation for several minutes, glancing shrewdly from time to time at the occupants of the boat. Finally having arrived at some decision, Red Fox with an air of great self-importance said:

"My brothers, Red Fox's heart is sad and filled with trouble. The White Lily's very donnite idea where his heart was locked, he had the key hung on his neck in a rugnt side, somewhere in the region between the arm and the big, while a look of comical consternation was depicted on his face. Passive face. "My brother and the White Lily will stay in the lodge of the Ojibways in peace. Their hearts would be glad again if the strangers would return to their friends in the country far away. Then the White Lily would sing again like the birds in the morning, and the brother, whose hair is like snow, would hunt the game in the forest and bring fish, and his heart would grow glad."

"But Red Fox," the doctor broke in impatiently, "we must see Mr. Blake and his daughter. We have good news for them."

The old chief drew himself up and looked cunningly at the speaker. "My brother and the White Lily are in the village of the mighty Ojibways," he said, with evident satisfaction, "and Red Fox, the powerful chief, is their friend. My brother who makes the good medicine and his friends will return to their camp. There is plenty game in the forest and plenty fish in the Great Water. My brother and the White Lily will stay in the lodge of the Great Water, and Red Fox, the powerful chief, and his mighty people will be their friends." he ended with a significant wave of his hand in the direction of the village down the shore.

A muttered oath fell from the lips of the old guide. "The Indian devil!" he muttered in righteous anger. "Does he think we're school children to be sent about our business like that? The blanked old redskin fool!"

The warning look from Doctor Hamilton stopped him, however. The other members of the party would not help smiling at the cunning of the wily old chief.

"But we came to see Mr. Blake, and we are determined to do so," the doctor said with great bravado, though his heart was almost despairing. "An hour before the full sun power we will be at the village to see Mr. Blake," he added, with every appearance of determination.

The Indian's face grew full in the face, for perhaps half a minute, then said: "Red Fox the powerful chief, has two hundred and fifty braves in the village and as many old men and squaws. The braves have many arms that speak loud," he added, with a dark look at the occupants of the boat. "Red Fox, my brother and the White Lily will stay in the village of the Ojibways, and Red Fox and his people will be glad to see their spades, brothers, farewell."

The chief abruptly and made down the shore before their astonished listeners could form a reply.

CHAPTER XXV.

MEDICINE FOR THE MIGHTY OJIBWAYS.

The baffled and defeated friends of the unfortunate Blake party gathered around in the camp at Fish Bay, each rucking his brain in fruitless attempts to outwit and outwit the Indians and gaining an audience with the chief.

It was most provoking to be within sight of the village where their friends dwelt and not be able to speak with them, and Red Fox when ten minutes' conversation would have straightened out the tangled web of their lives, and made many hearts the happier.

Doctor Hamilton had drawn a little apart from the others and lay stretched on the trunk of a fallen tree thinking deeply. Much as he worshiped at the shrine of Mildred and to his former position and the burden of guilt and fear removed from his life, yet the welfare of the beautiful Mildred was dearer to him. He realized perfectly that his beautiful love was made of the stuff that would sacrifice life itself in duty to a parent, and he might breathe no comfort to his soul. In that half-hour's time there thought that without Mildred the peerless Mildred would be a mere farce, a hollow, empty thing which he would not accept even if she forgot herself for a time in bitter, almost despairing, thought of a possible future to him. He sprang to his feet as though electrified, a thought, a wondrous one, in his mind at the astonished group.

"Has any one an almanac?" he asked eagerly.

With a smile Mr. Cadell drew the required book from his pocket and held it out. "I fear if we had no almanac, we wouldn't be long in the dark," he said, "for I take the Jews, and keep Saturday for Sunday, so I'm afraid we'd just now."

"Has any one an almanac?" he asked, with a penetrating glance at the doctor. "You look as though you had struck a mine!"

The doctor made no reply, and it is uncertain whether he heard the banker and dent's remarks, for at that moment he was deep in the calculations before him. Suddenly he gave a tremendous shout and jumped straight in the air, took off his hat, threw it high in the air, and then sat down.

"Bless the boy, what ails him?" his father cried, watching him closely, as though he feared it had not all left his brain. Then smiled at the wild joy depicted on his face.

"Listen," he said. "On the tenth of October, there will be a total eclipse of the sun. For about two hours, and will be visible in these parts."

"Ah!" said Mr. Cadell. "I begin to understand. I think I were all attention at once.

"I now will send a messenger at once to Red Fox, asking for permission to visit the village. If he refuses we are sure he will do, then we will work on his superstition to gain our ends."

"Good!" cried the others in a chorus. "We will make him believe that the fate of the mighty Ojibways is certain, unless they do as we wish."

"Let, me see," said Mr. Golden, "this is the seventh. Just three days."

"It's the most fortunate thing that could occur, said the doctor, his face expression running high.

They drew together and talked for upwards of an hour, then called their trusty old guide to carry the message to the village of Red Fox.

Their plans were laid before the guide, who readily fell in with the idea, and was quite elated at the prospect of such a rich drive at the cunning old Red Fox. Doctor Hamilton and the old guide set out at once. As they neared the shore they paused and signaled to the Indians to approach. Red Fox and two braves got into a canoe and came slowly and with much dignity toward them. Drawing up beside the doctor's boat, Red Fox pulled his forehead in silence, waiting for the others to speak.

"We have come again," the doctor began, "to ask Red Fox, the powerful chief, if we might visit our friends in the village?"

"Ugh," the Indian said, while as broad smile crossed his dark face. "Red Fox and his people are always glad to see their brother who makes the good medicine, but are sorry that he can't visit their village where the White Lily and her father dwell."

The doctor's face darkened. "I have made much medicine since we met when the sun was young. I have talked much with the Great Spirit, who is very angry with Red Fox and his people." An incredulous smile crossed the Indian faces while they listened. "Three suns from today, just after the full sun power, the Great Spirit will cause the sun to grow dark, and the village of the Ojibways will be in darkness. The great Spirit is very angry with Red Fox for not allowing us to visit our friends, and will send great hails of fire over their village, and a Manitou will come rising across the Great Water, and Red Fox and his mighty people will be no more." He spoke in a slow, solemn voice, gesticulating wildly.

A look of fear and awe crossed the dark, heavy faces for a moment as they listened to the awful prophecy. It was quickly dispelled as their natural daring and bravado asserted itself.

"My brother has made bad medicine today," the old chief observed, with most provoking coolness.

"It will be bad medicine for the mighty Red Fox and his people, if before three suns have passed he will not allow us to visit our brother."

They brother repeats that the Ojibways are mighty, and stretch from the Ottawa to the Mississippi. That the village where Red Fox is a very great chief," he said with a puff of pride, his dusky face radiant with a proud smile at the power of his tribe.

Doctor Hamilton was sorely tempted to lose his temper, and tell the cunning old Red Fox what he thought of him and his people, but he wisely restrained himself and said:

"If the mighty Ojibways have not sent word to the camp of their friends that they may visit their brother in the village before the full power of the sun's day, then the Great Spirit will send darkness over the Ojibways, horrible diseases will come among them, and no Ojibways will be left in the village by the Great Water."

Doctor Hamilton's dignity and mien awed their fear of the camp. Glancing back they beheld the frightened Indians in attitudes of terror, terror depicted on their dark faces, gazing as though fascinated at their retreating figures.

"That's one for the Indian devils!" the old guide said with a wink at his uncle, glancing at the doctor who was convulsed with silent laughter.

"It's working beautifully," he said, in a low tone, as they left them quaking with terror before it's over."

CHAPTER XXVI.

MIDNIGHT AT NOON.

On the morning of the tenth of October, all was eager expectation in the camp at Fish Bay. The night had been a restless one, little else had been spoken of but the Indians and the eclipse, and the strange effect it would have upon them. That they would be terrified by the strange phenomena was a matter of course, and the terror would be great enough to compell them to visit their friends at the white camp. As the hour approached for the eclipse, Doctor Hamilton procured from the camp a dozen sky rockets, which he was fortunate enough to have brought with him. There was also a large, glaring lantern of peculiar workmanship. This he carefully muffled with a number of blankets, and placed close to his lips to try the result. A long, dreary, mournful sound like the wail of a lost soul who heard it. They imagined it must closely resemble the cry of the lost.

"Hold on there!" they cried with a laugh, as a shiver went up their spines.

"I think that will answer well," Mr. Golden smiled at the wild joy depicted on Then, under the friendly shadows, they could steal across the shore, and get their sky rockets to work. Their companions were to join them at the first appearance of the shadow of the eclipse. The doctor had a powerful field glass, and from their point of vantage they could closely scrutinize the Indian village for signs of activity or unrest.

With a wild throb of joy Doctor Hamilton saw the first shadow fall across the sun's heavenly disc, knew that success or failure would be theirs within the next few hours. The Indians, unaware of the coming calamity handing the glass to the guide.

"Sure nuff!" the other answered with a smile of satisfaction. "The redskins will soon see it now. Lor, what fun there'll be there, poor devils!" he said, with a low, smothered laugh, pleasantly anticipating the Indians' fear.

"If they're watching, they must surely see it now," the doctor observed, leveling the glass at the village. "Ah, they see it, he cried. "They are huddled together in little groups watching it. Well win yet, or I'm a Dutchman!"

Looking back they could see their comrades parting out from the camp and coming toward them. By the time their friends had joined them the sun was almost entirely hidden.

As the last remnant of the sun disappeared behind the dark object which shad-

owed it, a wild, weird chant came floating across the water.

"Ah! that's the death song of the Ojibways," the old guide said. "They believe their doom is sealed, and are singing their own funeral song. Whenever a member of the tribe dies, they sing that song."

"We'll give them a little variation," the doctor said with a grim smile.

Drawing forth the rockets and horn, they separated from their friends, and drew nearer the shore. The wild song was still going on, now low and soft, now swelling into a shrill shriek that would slowly die away in a wail of pain.

Doctor Hamilton handed Villeneuve the rockets while he took the horn. As the first rocket ascended in a stream of fire, the weird chanting ceased abruptly, and a deathlike silence ensued.

Give them one every three minutes," the doctor said, with an amused chuckle, "and I'll strike up the music."

Up went another rocket, and was greeted by a horrible yell from more than five hundred throats in the village. Doctor Hamilton began on the horn, and a series of wild blood-curdling shrieks followed each other in quick succession, which presently died down to a low, mournful wail. Then followed the most demoniac shrieks imaginable, which, as they slowly died away, sounded like low, mocking laughter, which almost froze the blood in their veins as they listened. Then followed a pause, and up went a steady stream of fiery rockets.

"What's that?" the old guide asked, as they paused for a moment. The Indians could be seen carrying, or rather dragging, something to the mouth of the cavern. The two peered anxiously through the deep twilight, but their movements were scarcely discernible.

As for me, it is Mr. Blake!" the doctor said in low, guarded tones. "We have won."

It was with difficulty he restrained himself from shouting aloud.

As the dark forms reached the water's edge, they seemed to pause a moment as though undecided what course to pursue.

"Give them another," he whispered to the guide. "They may change their minds if they think the danger is past."

Another rocket ascended, accompanied by the wild, unearthly screeches of the horn.

The Indians' hesitation quickly disappeared. The object they had been carrying was placed carefully in a boat, a solid dark figure flashed in after it. Then two, mighty push the boat shot far out into the calm pool of waters at the base of the cliff, and haste to be rid of them, they forgot to provide them with paddles. Fortunately they didn't need them, for a boat shot out from behind an adjacent rock and came swiftly toward them.

"Mildred, my own darling!" the doctor cried in ecstasy. "Forgive me this, but it was the only thing I could do."

The beautiful girl was weeping bitterly. Pointing to her father's inanimate form in the bottom of the boat she said—

He is there. But you will never ask him to listen to answer for that evil deed. He is almost gone." Her voice was the bitterness of death in it, as she cast a glance of keen reproach at the man before her.

"My darling, your father will never have to answer for a crime. He committed none. It was all a dreadful mistake. Your father did not kill his brother Alfred, only stunned him."

"You are sure?" she asked eagerly, while a light of hope shone out from her dark eyes, her face as to almost transfigure her.

"Yes, darling, I'm sure," he said softly and tenderly.

"Thank God! my father is not a criminal! There is no blood on his hands," she clasped her hands, and raised her pale little face to Heaven, murmuring a few inaudible words.

Doctor Hamilton and the guide reverently bared their heads while their lips silently blurred and misty. "The scene was impressive. It was a daughter's joy and thankfulness at the innocence of a parent, whom circumstances had forced her to believe a criminal.

"Whatever happens now I can bear it, since my father is innocent."

"My dear, God alone knows how I have longed for this moment," the presence of the white-haired guide was forgotten. Leaning over he caught one thin white hand. Drawing her head closer to his lips he pressed a fervent kiss on her cold white lips, then said—

"We must hasten with your father to more comfortable quarters, and he cast an anxious look at the white unconscious face in the bottom of the boat.

CHAPTER XXVII.
CONCLUSION.

In the cabin by the river Mr. Blake—as he will continue to call him—lay sinking rapidly. By his side sat the beautiful Mildred, whose one cold white hand held her own. Mr. Golden and Mr. Cadell sat on the opposite side of the bed, while the doctor and his father stood at the foot.

"How long?" the dying man asked, in weak, faltering tones.

"Possibly four hours," the doctor replied sadly.

The dying man motioned the doctor to come nearer, and whispered a few words in his ear, which made the young man's heart throb with a wild joy.

"Mildred, child," he faltered, turning to the sobbing girl, "I know that you love Doctor Hamilton, even as your mother loved me. It would make me very happy could I see you his wife before I die."

"But papa, no," she sobbed. "I can't think of marriage just now."

"My child, it is a last request. I could die happy knowing you were his wife. You would then have some one to care for and protect you." The last sinking man paused for breath, wistful pleading in his dim eyes. "Tell me, dear, that I may send a message to the minister beyond the village, and he will come and perform the ceremony."

Mildred glanced shyly at Doctor Hamilton. "For darling, let it be as he wishes," she said tenderly.

The message was sent by the faithful old guide, and Mildred still sat silent and tearful-eyed beside her father's side. The loving hearts gathered about that deathbed were much affected by the sad scene.

In due time the guide returned with the minister, and with him had accompanied him. The solemn ceremony was performed without delay by the bedside of the dying father. When it was over, and Mildred had been given to the doctor for better or for worse, a look of calm content came to the white, pallid face of the dying man, a faint smile parted the lips which had not smiled for years.

"Kneel, my daughter," he said, after a moment, "and have made me very happy. [illegible] And [illegible] and prote f you [illegible] was evident that the end was fast approaching. The feeble hand [illegible] over the coverlet till he caught the [illegible] hand.

"My son, I have given into your keeping one treasure on earth. I know you are worthy of her—I believe she will prove an inspiration—to the struggling young genius none of the weakness that—blighted my life. Be kind, my children, to each other. Be sweet, strong natures—tender and true as [illegible] closed his eyes and sighed wearily.

The doctor bowed his head on the cold white hand. "My God! my God!" was all his heart. It will be my pleasure and duty to protect her, to cherish her, as long as I live," was the solemn answer.

"I know it, my son, I know. I can trust you." The end was near. The low, faltering tones had sunk into a scarcely audible whisper.

Mr. Golden and Mr. Cadell were visibly affected by the solemn scene.

It was a strange wedding for the beautiful girl. There was congratulation—not expressions of happiness, on the wedding chest. Those gathered there felt that any expression of that kind would have been a cruel mockery at the sorrow of the bride. Even the mystery about the death of the motherless girl in her arms and kissed the white lips reverently in her turn.

Mr. Golden leaned over the bed and took his brother's hand. "Have you no word for me, Blake? Surely the bitterness of your heart is not bitter against us?" he asked in a voice choked with emotion.

"There is no bitterness in my heart now, Golden. There was no one to blame but myself. It was my own folly that caused my ruin—and spoiled your life, too, my friend. Can you forgive me?"

"Poor George! How different [illegible] have been, had you only [illegible] Mr. Cadell said, intense regret in his voice. "You have ruined my life, my friend, as surely as the past. I had no right to act so unmanly as I did, for that things might have been very different.

"All right—you were not to blame—it [illegible] of her—he thought I was right—I—I—[illegible] but a broken voice. He closed his eyes and a shudder swept over him.

Mildred threw her arms about his neck, and sobbed, "Papa! papa!" speak to me! Don't leave me [illegible]

The glazed eyes opened and looked at her. The lips moved, a powerful struggle for speech.

"What is it, papa?" she asked, and bent very low.

"Mother! mother! I see her, Mildred." His face brightened for a moment, he clutched wildly at the coverlet, gave a low cry, threw quick, deep gasps, then all was over, and Mildred Blake was an orphan.

We will not dwell on the young bride's wild outburst of grief. Within a month she had lost father and mother.

Two days later [illegible] wended his way toward the little graveyard beyond the village, and Mr. [illegible] beside the new-made grave of his wife. It was the largest funeral that had ever taken place in the village. The whole village population turned out to pay their last respects to a neighbor who had always been kind and considerate. All the employees of the men from the lumber camps in the neighborhood attended. Nearly, tenderhearted Dave at their head.

Red Fox, one of the more adventurous of his braves with the exception of the solemn rites from a distance, nor could they be induced to leave the village until he had somewhat recovered from their recent [illegible] to [illegible] fearful, [illegible] their intense love for their brother, [illegible] called Mr. Blake, that tempted them to venture beyond their boundaries.

A rumor had spread among the simple folk of the neighborhood that beautiful Mildred Blake and Doctor Hamilton were married. Many pooh-poohed the idea [illegible] believable. Yet, strange to say, those who were not envious were delighted at the good fortune that had befallen the girl. Congratulations were cast at the doctor and his beautiful bride as they stood sorrowfully by the open grave.

As the last sod was laid over the loving father, the little party turned with heavy hearts homeward. In that moment, when [illegible] father was being [illegible] near, she understood with what infinite tenderness the loving father had foreseen this moment, and had given her into the sight of consoling her to the one he esteemed worthy of the honor. She could weep now her grief and be consoled in the tender, loving arms of the man who had sworn to cherish and protect her through life.

Mr. Hartney, the minister, and his kindhearted wife, returned with the bereaved ones to the lonely cabin home. Doctor Hamilton insisted on their remaining for his wife and himself in the hotel in the village, but Mildred objected. She wished to remain in her old home as long as possible. While there she felt nearer her father and mother.

The camp at Fish Bay was moved to the cabin, that they might all be together. As soon as Mr. Cadell had finished the business concerning the timber limits, which brought him to the district, he would bid farewell to the Northern wilds and return to their native city.

Mildred gathered together the few things which, from tender associations, she did not care to part with, and packed them safely for the journey. Her faithful little pony she presented to the minister's wife, to carry her about in ill health and work which her kind Christian heart found to do in the village. There was always a sick child or a poor settler's wife who was ill and needed care. Where sickness and trouble were the minister and his wife were far distant.

To Villeneuve, the old French guide, she gave the cabin with its rude furnishings of all the land under cultivation in front, in return for the services rendered herself and her father.

About noon, on the last day of their stay, three Indian canoes were seen coming around the bend in the river. Red Fox sat in the bow of the first, erect and dignified, his huge body bedecked with [illegible] feathers and beads. They came [illegible] the river, and as silently landed before the cabin. They followed one after the [illegible] with the soft, stealthy tread peculiar to the Indian, but when Red Fox entered it came self and gave them a smile of welcome.

"Good morning, Red Fox!" she said sweetly, opening the door wide for him to enter.

"Ah, White Lily," he said in a deep voice that was good. We come, my brothers and I, to see the White Lily, whose heart is sad since her father is no more. We heard in the village that the pale-face has taken to good medicine," with a grim smile at the doctor, "and that the White Lily for his squaw and would carry her away from us far away." Here he paused and looked at Mildred, who blushed and opened it her self and gave them a smile of welcome.

"Good morning, Red Fox!" she said sweetly, opening the door wide for him to enter.

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"Red Fox, the White Lily is my wife, and we [illegible] sorrow for our home in a country [illegible]" the doctor answered, amused at the look on the old chief's face.

The old chief regarded [illegible] silently for some moments. "My brother can make good medicine sometimes with a [illegible] Fox, disapprovingly. "But when next he comes to the village of the Ojibways to do his bad medicine, he may perhaps need it. A drop from the copious folds of [illegible] to cast the identical horn with which the doctor had summoned the braves during the eclipse. "My brother dropped this when the water is low near the village, the brave [illegible] and [illegible] a shrill blast which caused [illegible] to shriek their slowly died away in the distance.

A look of pride came from the [illegible] of the old chief, as they gained the Indian's [illegible] The look of admiration on the doctor's face convinced [illegible] Red Fox and his braves smiled at his [illegible] Mildred, who alone kept his composure, however, and said—

"Red Fox will keep the horn. Then he will always remember the bad medicine and smile at his brother. But his brother will make bad medicine no more, since the White Lily is his wife." He took the horn and placed it in the old chief's hand, but [illegible] its sound. Then he blew a few low, silvery notes which at once attracted the attention of the Indians, who gathered around him while he [illegible] the little air, which rang in the [illegible] harmonious sounds eagerly, for the Indian, [illegible] a wonderful appreciation for [illegible] many of sound, and is partial to a great [illegible] music. He then handed the horn back to the old chief, who received it with the delight of a child.

As the old chief stood in the doorway [illegible] a dozen stalwart dusky braves in the [illegible] Mildred just what he was, a [illegible] North American Indian, straight, [illegible] and well-featured, but withal possessed of a kindly heart, with a good capacity for friendship. Turning, he beckoned a brave to approach. He came forward and laid a bundle at his chief's feet, then resolutely withdrew to his former position. Red Fox glanced critically at the bundle, and then a deep flushing Mildred.

"The people in the village have told us [illegible] the White Lily is going far away, and Red Fox and the mighty Ojibways will see her no more. My people's hearts are sad. They love the kind White Lily, who has always been their friend. They come, Red Fox, chief of the mighty Ojibways, and bring to the White Lily of their friendship, and they bring her a present. When [illegible] the [illegible] from the cabin by the Sleeping Water, then will the hearts of all the Ojibways be sad. When they [illegible] the pleasant river past the lodge of the [illegible] White Lily, then will they think of their friend who was always their friend, but whose pleasant voice they will hear no more, and of the White Lily who dwells in a country far away."

took up the pack and untied the [illegible] fringings which had been trembling [illegible] It was evident that the old chief was much pleased with the present which it displayed. Three priceless black fox skins, and six beautiful minks, were laid at the feet of the lovely girl.

"Red Fox and his people are kind, and their friendship fills the White Lily's [illegible] with music. She will always thank [illegible] and remember they were her [illegible] friends. After many moons have [illegible] she will come again and visit them in [illegible] lodges by the Great Water. She will wear their presents, and think always of her friends, the mighty Ojibways, who dwell in the forest by the Great Water." Her voice quivered and almost broke.

"Ah, it is good [illegible] section [illegible] Doctor Hamilton, [illegible] brother who makes the good [illegible] and his brother who [illegible] Water with him to bring [illegible] Red Fox will always remember [illegible] who made the bad medicine [illegible] touching the horn with [illegible]

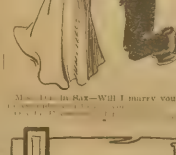
The doctor touched [illegible] member Red Fox and [illegible] will come again to [illegible] much good [illegible]

[illegible]

He [illegible] [illegible] will [illegible]

He then turned to Mildred [illegible] her husband is [illegible] the friend of [illegible] He held out one [illegible] brown [illegible] took between her own [illegible]

"Red Fox, the friend [illegible] well." Her cool [illegible] and her with sympathy for those [illegible] hearted. Red Fox went [illegible] brave, and gave him a [illegible] and a few words of [illegible] in the dove's eye to [illegible] watched the center their [illegible] and saddle down to the [illegible] [illegible] with wistful eyes till they passed from view around the bend in the river. Standing there with the sunshine falling over her and the [illegible] of love in her husband's eyes as they read upon her, we will leave them trusting that the future may have only peace and happiness in [illegible]



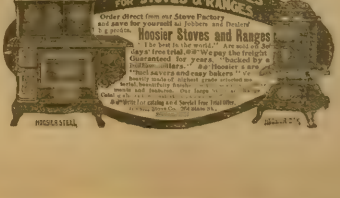
"Do you know, James, what leading a strenuous life means?"

"No. Pop: it mean lacking de stuffin' outer [illegible] [illegible] her say you is."

Where He Fell Down.

Biggs—Do you consider Higgins a man of good judgment?

Diggs—He would be if he didn't rely so much on his own judgment.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* * *

Want of Exercise weakens and relaxes the Bowel-Muscles, just as it weakens Arm and Leg muscles.

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* * *

Heavy dinners, late suppers, whisky, wine or beer drinking, nervous excitement, sudden exposure to cold or heat and a dozen other everyday likelihoods tire the Bowel-Muscles.

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* * *

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UNCLE SAM'S MESSENGER;

Or, THE BOY WHO FOUND GARCIA. By S. A. D. COX.

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Begun in No. 31, August 3. Subscription can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XVI.

BEN IS SELECTED FOR SECRET WORK.

Ben was a quick-witted youth, and although taken somewhat by surprise, he was determined not to let himself be roughly handled by this big ruffian.

His mind worked quickly, and knowing that he would not stand any chance with the man in an encounter, Ben threw himself forward on the ground at the feet of the fellow, who tripped against the prostrate form of the youth and fell headlong on the ground.

This was Ben's opportunity, and he leaped to his feet and bounded away at the top of his speed.

The man scrambled to his feet and started in pursuit, giving utterance to threats of what he would do when he caught the fugitive, but Ben was not afraid of being caught.

"I can outrun him, all right" was his thought.

And he soon proved this, for the burly pursuer was soon left far behind and gave up the chase.

I had forgotten all about him," thought Ben. "I will have to be on the lookout, or he may do me some damage when I am least expecting it."

As soon as he saw that the man had ceased the pursuit Ben stopped running, and walked along at a moderate pace.

He reached home in a few minutes, and told his mother and sister Nan and Lucy Ann all about it.

He did not tell them of his encounter with the man, as he knew it would alarm them, coming on top of his late experience, which had already shocked their nerves more or less.

He talked and laughed and made light of his recent adventures, and told them not to worry about him.

"There is no danger of my being kidnaped again, I guess," he said.

Lucy went into her part of the house, presently, and then Ben and his mother and sister went to bed.

Next day Ben had more business than he could attend to, and had to send for Alice to come and help him in the store. The article in the papers about him being kidnaped aboard the schooner and then heading the party of sailors and making prisoners of the captain and mate, when the latter were pursuing the schooner, had aroused great interest in him, and people came to his store to make purchases just to get to see and talk to him. Then, too, it was noised about that he was the youth who had been the means of causing the capture of the band of counterfeiters.

Ben was glad of the business, but he disliked to have to talk about his exploits, and did as little of it as possible. But the majority of the customers insisted on asking him questions, and he had to answer, which he did courteously and pleasantly.

Alice, on the contrary, was glad to talk about her brother's exploits and adventures with the counterfeiters and kidnapers and on the schooner, and she not only answered the questions that were put to her, but volunteered information. She was proud of Ben, and wanted that he should have all the credit that was his due.

The store of business kept up pretty much all day, and was almost as good next day. It seemed that it fell back to about the normal amount.

A day or two later the chief of the secret service employes, who had been in the store on no one in at the time, making purchases, he called Ben into the rear and said:

"I want to have a little talk with you, Ben."

"All right, sir," the youth replied.

"And I ask that you hold whatever I say to you as being strictly confidential."

"Certainly, sir."

"Very good. I will speak to you freely, then. Ben I have just been up to the White House, in consultation with the President and his confidential advisers, and it is desired to send a message to the Cuban General Garcia. The difficulty must be managed with the greatest secrecy and it will be a very difficult task to accomplish, as the messenger will be exposed to all sorts of dangers the moment he sets foot on Cuban soil. The President asked me to find some one to undertake the trip, and I have promised to do so. Of course, a man might succeed in getting through the Spanish lines and reaching Garcia, but I would be much more difficult for a boy to do so as a boy would be less likely to be suspected of being sent on such a message. The trouble, as a rule, would be to find a boy capable of doing such work. I at once thought of you, Ben, and I believe that you could do it. What do you think?"

Ben had listened in amazement, and now he gasped out:

"What! me go to Cuba—a special message from the President!"

The chief nodded.

"Just so," he said, quietly.

Ben was silent for a few moments, during which time he looked thoughtfully out of the door.

"Do you really think that I could do the work, sir?" he asked.

Yes," promptly, "don't you?"

Ben smiled, and a somewhat grim look came over his face.

"Well, if I set out to do it, I would make a success of it, if such a thing were possible," he said.

"I am sure of that, my boy. Well, what do you say?"

Ben looked around the store, and then said:

"I will make the attempt to carry the message to Garcia, sir."

"Good! I thought you would be willing to do so."

"How soon will I have to start?"

"Just as soon as your affairs will permit. It can be ready by tomorrow."

"All right, sir."

"You see, I will have to get some one to run the store while I am away."

"Yes, of course."

Ben thought a few moments, and then said:

"You are sure the President will be satisfied with me for a messenger, sir?"

"Yes, I am sure of it. I shall tell him all about you, and what you did in the matter of the capture of the counterfeiters, and also in effecting the capture of the captain and mate of the filibustering schooner. This will be sufficient to show him that you are a boy who is somewhat out of the ordinary."

Ben blushed and said:

"I am afraid that you are giving me more credit than I deserve, sir."

"I think not, my boy. By the way, can you go with me to the White House sometime this afternoon?"

"Yes, sir."

"At what hour?"

"Any hour that I convenient for you."

"Will three o'clock do?"

"Yes."

"I'll come for you at that hour."

"I'll be ready."

Then the chief took his departure, and Ben went to wait on a customer.

He had quite a little bizzing with wonder and excitement, and he could hardly realize, even now, that he was to go on a mission of great importance for the Government.

Special messenger to Cuba, from the President of the United States!

He could hardly bring himself to believe it. He more than half suspected that he would wake up, presently, and find that it was all a dream.

CHAPTER XVII.

BEN TELLS HIS FOLKS THAT HE IS GOING TO CUBA.

When Ben went home to dinner that day, his face and eyes shone with eagerness and excitement, and his mother noted it at once.

"What is it, son?" she asked. "There is something on your mind. Tell us what it is."

Alice looked at her brother keenly.

"I believe you are right, mother," she said. "Tell us, brother."

"Can you come to the store for an hour or two this afternoon, Sis?" Ben purred.

"Yes, of course, but what are you going to do? Where are you going?"

"To the White House," was the quiet reply.

Ben's mother and sister stared at him in amazement, and then exclaimed in unison:

"To the White House!"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"What are you going there?"

"Is dinner ready?" asked Ben, smiling.

"Yes," his mother replied. "Sit up to the table.

"Oh, you mean boy!" from Alice. "You know I am dying to know what it means."

"I'll tell you while we are eating," was the reply.

They sat up to the table, and then Alice said:

"Now tell us all about it, Ben."

I will; but first I must ask you to keep the matter a secret."

Just then there came a rap on the door and Lucy's voice was heard asking, "May I come in?"

"Yes, come right in, Lucy," called out Mrs. Bolton.

"Do you want her to know?" half whispered Alice.

"Yes," said Ben; "she will keep it secret, I am sure."

Lucy entered and greeted all three pleasantly. Then she took a seat at one side of the table.

"Now go ahead with your story," said Alice. "It is too bad the way I have to coax you in this fashion."

"That is all right, Lucy," said Mrs. Bolton.

"Yes, indeed!" from Ben.

"He was just starting to tell some thing of interest," said Alice. "He is to go to the White House this afternoon, and he was going to tell us why; but he wants it kept secret."

Lucy made a motion as if to get up.

"Oh, perhaps I had better go home," she said. "I don't want to know anything about this, unless you really want me to."

"Well, I do," said Ben. "All I ask is that you keep it secret, and I know you will do that."

"Yes, indeed."

"Now go ahead, Ben and tell us why you are going to the White House," said Alice.

"I am going there to see the President."

"The President!"

"Oh, my!"

"I am to go at three o'clock, to consult with the chief of the secret service."

The three stared at Ben in amazement.

"Oh, are you going to be mixed up in some dreadful burglar or counterfeiter-catching business again, Ben?" asked his mother.

"No, mother; it's something different, this time."

"Tell us what it is!" cried Alice.

"Yes, yes, do!" from Lucy.

"Very well—but remember, now, not a word to a human being about it. I am to go to Cuba on a special mission for the President!"

"What!"

"You don't mean it."

"You go to Cuba, Ben!"

Such were the exclamations, and the three stared at him in wonder and amazement.

"Yes. You see the chief said that it is believed that a boy can go to Cuba and get through to General Garcia with a message easier than a man can, as he will be less likely to be suspected and so thought of me because I had helped in the capture of the counterfeiters."

"And you are to go to Cuba and carry a message to Garcia, Ben!" exclaimed Alice.

"Goodness!" from Lucy.

"It will be a very dangerous undertaking,

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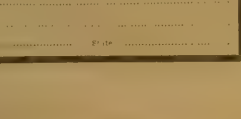

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will it not?" asked Mrs. Bolton, anxiously.

Ben knew that it would be, but he did not want that his mother should be worried any more than was necessary, and so he decided to make light of the danger, and said:

"Oh, there will be some danger, mother; but not a great deal. I have no fears for my safety, however, and I don't want you to worry about me, mother."

"I'm afraid that I won't be able to keep from doing so, my son."

"Don't think of that part of it; think of the great honor that has been bestowed upon me in being chosen as the one to carry the message to Garcia."

"It is a great honor, sure enough," said Lucy.

"Yes, indeed!" from Alice.

"When will you have to go, Ben?" from his mother."

"I expect to start tomorrow, mother."

"What! so soon?"

"Yes; now, my motto is to 'Do it now,' mother. I don't believe in putting off."

"I know that, and it is a good motto; but I—that won't give me much time to get used to the idea of your going on such a dangerous journey, Ben."

"It is not going to be dangerous, mother. I want you to get that idea out of your mind," with a smile.

The good woman shook her head.

"I can't get it out of my mind, Ben," she said; "but I will do the best I can."

"And you are going tomorrow!" murmured Lucy.

"Yes— that is, if the President has the message ready, and I guess he will."

They talked all the time Ben was eating, and when he was ready to start back to the store, he said to Alice:

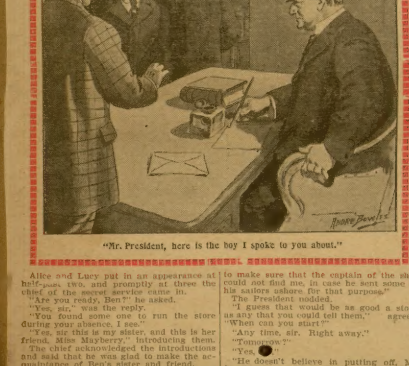
"Don't forget, Sis, that you are to be at the store before three o'clock."

"I'll be there, Ben."

"And I'm coming, too," said Lucy.

"Good!" giving her an approving glance, "You will be company for Sis."

Then he hastened out and away to the store.



"Mr. President, here is the boy I spoke to you about."

Alice and Lucy put in an appearance at half-past two, and promptly at three the chief of the secret service came in.

"Are you ready, Ben?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"You found some one to run the store during your absence, I see."

"Yes, sir this is my sister, and this is her friend, Miss Mayberry," introducing them.

The chief acknowledged the introductions and said that he was glad to make the acquaintance of Ben's sister and friend.

"He is a boy in a thousand, Miss Bolton," he said to Alice. "You ought to be proud of him."

"I am!" was the prompt reply. "And so is Lucy," she added, mischievously.

"Aha, I see! I don't doubt it," laughed the chief, and Lucy, blushing like a peony, gave Alice a slap and said:

"You mean girl, you!"

"That's all right, Lucy," laughed Ben. "Don't flush up so. I'm proud of you, too."

"Good for you, my boy!" laughed the chief, and then with a cherry good-bye to the girls, he led the way from the store, Ben following.

Ten minutes later they were in the White House, and five minutes afterward they were ushered into the private room of the President.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESIDENT.

President McKinley, his private secretary and three or four members of the cabinet were in the room when the chief of the secret service entered, accompanied by Ben.

As soon as the door had closed behind them the chief bowed and said:

"Mr. President, here is the boy I spoke to you about when I was here this morning. His name is Ben Bolton. Ben this is President McKinley."

The President extended his hand, at the same time eying Ben keenly and searchingly.

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Ben Bolton," he said, in a kindly voice.

"Thank you, sir," said Ben.

"Be seated, my boy, and you too, chief," said the President, when he had shaken hands with the youth.

Ben took a seat in a chair that was just across the table from where President McKinley sat, the chief sat down near the end of the table. The private secretary and the members of the cabinet were scrutinizing Ben closely.

"You have explained to him the nature of the service that is expected of him, chief?" queried the President.

"Yes, sir."

"And you are willing to attempt the mission, my boy?" to Ben.

"Yes, sir," was the reply.

"Do you understand that the mission will be attended with considerable danger?"

"Yes, sir I supposed that such would be the case."

"And you are willing to risk it?"

"I am, sir."

"You can speak Spanish?"

"No, sir."

"Good. That does not matter greatly. You will run across persons, occasionally, who speak English.

He opened a drawer of the desk and drew forth a map. This he spread out in front of him, and pointed to a red cross marked near the center from north to south, and about two-fifths of the distance from the east and of the island of Cuba.

"General Garcia is somewhere in the vicinity of the spot represented by the red X," said the President. "Now, how would you go about reaching him?"

All looked at Ben with interest, and awaited his reply.

"I haven't given that matter any thought, sir," he replied "but, my idea is that the only way to do would be to land at about the nearest point on the coast and then make my way inland as rapidly as possible."

"But you are likely to be captured by the Spaniards. What then?"

"I think, sir, that I would say that I had leaped from my boat, swum ashore, and that I was going as far inland as possible

"Yes, sir."

"And you can remember it all?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Very well. And now, as I shall not see you again before you leave, I will say good-bye and God-speed," and he shook hands with Ben.

"Good-bye, sir, I shall do my best to merit the confidence which you have reposed in me."

"I am sure of that, my boy."

Then the members of the cabinet and the private secretary shook hands with Ben and wished him success, after which he took his departure in the company of the chief.

They parted around on Pennsylvania avenue and the chief went to his office, while Ben stopped in a shoe store and bought a new pair of shoes—strong, serviceable ones, with good, thick soles.

These he took up to the chief's office and handed them to the chief, who, as it happened, was alone at the time.

"They fit you all right, eh?" with a smile.

"Yes, sir."

"Good. They have thick soles, I see, and that is good, too."

"Yes, sir," with a smile.

Then he took his leave and was soon back in his store.

How his business been, girls, he asked.

"Lively," replied Alice. "We have both been busy most of the time, haven't we, Lucy?"

"Yes."

"That is good."

There happened to be no patrons in the store just at that moment, and they inquired eagerly if he was really to go to Cuba.

"Yes," he replied "I am to start tomorrow at two o'clock, on the cruiser Albemarle."

Then he told them as much as was necessary, explaining how he expected to reach Garcia after landing on the island.

They listened with interest, and when they heard mention made of the fact that Lieutenant Rowen had carried a message to Garcia a couple of months before, they said they remembered having read about it.

"Well, if he did it, I can do it," said Ben.

"I believe you will be successful," said Lucy, confidently.

"So do I," said Alice; "but you must be careful, brother."

"I'll be careful."

They talked a few minutes longer, and then Lucy said:

"Who is going to run the store while you are away?"

"Joe Hawley," was the reply. "I will see him this evening, and make arrangements with him. Of course, I shall expect you girls to help him occasionally, the same as you have me."

"Yes, certainly we'll do that, Ben," said Alice.

"Yes, she'll be glad to do so!" said Lucy, with a mischievous smile.

"There! I suppose you are even with me for what I said to the chief about you being proud of Ben," said Alice.

"Why partly even you two, the chief wasn't here to hear what I said."

Some customers entered just then and interrupted the conversation.

The girls remained till the customers had been waited on, and then they took their departure.

That evening Joe dropped in, and when Ben told him that he was to have charge of the store for a while, the youth was delighted. Of course Ben told him where he was going, and why, but extracted a promise of secrecy from him.

"I'll run the store all right, Ben," Joe declared. "And I hope that I won't have to go back to the A. D. T. office when you get back from Cuba."

"You won't have to do so, for when I come back, I am going to rent a larger room and enlarge my stock and add two or

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SISTER VERONICA.

BY FLORA HAINES.

The doctor's wife scanned her vistor in silence. With the audacity of a woman who believed she had been the victim of imposture she was revolving in her mind certain impious questions. This was the third mendicant in pious garb who had come to her door within a month, soliciting alms for the support of some far-away religious institution. Who was to assure her that the contributions she had already made would be faithfully dedicated to the purpose for which they had been given? In her growing distrust she leaped to reckless surmises. What if these black-robed women were not "sisters" after all, but merely bold impostors, who assumed the dress of the order for the time for their own selfish aims and purposes?

She recalled herself from the reverie with a little shudder, and her voice was hard and cold as she spoke.

"Sister Veronica, I really do not feel justified in helping your hospitals and asylums any more. I think it is time we were looking up the poor about us. There may be fellow beings suffering in our midst without a murmur, people whose pride forbids them to appeal to public charity. I think we should be doing more nobly if we devoted our time to looking up such cases, instead of contributing to the support of distant institutions, of which we know nothing."

"Oh, madam, if others were only of your thinking!" interrupted the visitor impetuously.

"What then? I fear you would not succeed so well in your missions."

Mrs. Belden leaned forward as she spoke, and gazed curiously upward into the countenance beneath the peaked white bonnet. The momentary flutter, and the crimson wave which had transformed her caller's face, passed away, leaving it cold and still in its purity.

"One must rejoice at any lessening of the great sum of human misery," was the quiet response.

Sister Veronica turned to go. She had not only failed in her errand, but had met with a decided rebuff; yet at the door she paused a moment, and held out a shapely white hand, which met the other's in a sympathetic grasp.

The doctor's wife stood at the window with mingled curiosity and interest, and watched her visitor depart. To her surprise, the latter did not continue up the street, but retraced her steps along the lonely path leading in the direction of the railway station.

The picture of the strange woman lingered obstinately in Mrs. Belden's memory. There was something oddly familiar about her face. The very dimples in her cheeks—that a sister of charity should have dimples!—the gentle curves of chin and mouth, and the bright flash of her eyes, unsubdued by the long and weary penance to which her pale face and wasted figure bore testimony, were all parts of a haunting and elusive memory. She wondered to what order the woman belonged. The skirt of her robe was certainly very scant and shabby, and a faint line around the bottom reminded her of the mark left on her own black silk dress where she had lately ripped off a plaiting. A little starch and skilful manipulation might easily convert a pillow-case stiffly starched into one of those large, square bonnets. But after a short time Mrs. Belden dismissed these wandering speculations from her mind, and, resuming her sewing, was soon deeply absorbed in her work.

* * * * * * * * *

Several months sped by, and the good lady, in spite of her creditable resolutions, had taken no active step toward ascertaining the circumstances of her neighbors. One day had been too chilly, another too windy, a third too warm, to sally forth on her charitable errand. So she had contented herself with making a few inquiries of chance visitors. She had been laughed at for her pains. It was an axiom in the town that no worthy and industrious person could ever suffer for lack of food or raiment.

There came a day when the doctor was late to his six-o'clock dinner. The table was spread in the cozy dining room, and the food simmered on the range. The young housewife vibrated between the table and window. The little cathedral clock on the parlor mantel sounded the half-hour.

To the waiting young wife the minutes slowly passed, and it was after nine o'clock when she described a dark figure hurrying up the street. The gate opened and shut with a click, and the doctor bounded up the steps, to be met with a tearful greeting on the part of his wife.

"Oh, Robert, you don't know what I have suffered! I was so afraid that some of those dreadful men who are always——"

"Nonsense, child!"

But his voice was tremulous, and as he reached out his hand and laid a long morocco case on the table, she noticed that his face was pale and drawn.

"An operation, dear? What was it?"

He did not answer at once. Indeed, he sat down to the table and drank his cup of tea and ate a few mouthfuls—chattering meanwhile in an absent way on indifferent topics. It was only when they had gone to the little parlor, and he had thrown himself into a great easy chair before the glowing fire, that he replied to her question.

"A seven-year-old boy, dear. Leg crushed. Stood it like a hero!"

"How did it happen—the injury, I mean?"

"Slipped and fell under a backing engine. They seemed to have been pretty badly off—the mother and child—and the fireman of engine No. 26 had been in the habit of throwing off lumps of coal for the little fellow to pick up. Today the lad tried to climb up before they had slowed down, and missed his footing, and fell."

"How he must have suffered!"

"He never seemed to think of himself at all. Was possessed with a fear that the fireman might be blamed. Beautiful little fellow, in spite of his shabby clothes. Broad white forehead, curling brown hair, and thoughtful gray eyes. Do you know, I can't get rid of a certain fancy that I've seen the child before."

"Probably in the streets," suggested Mrs. Belden.

"No, no. Years ago; when I was a boy, or in some other existence."

"Where do they live?"

"In the mother's home—a rude little cabin, on the outskirts. I declare, Bessie, I never suspected there was such destitution in this place. We had to perform the operation by the light of a kerosene-lamp. She held it."

"The mother?"

"Yes, and never flinched. Shielded it with her hand to keep the wind from putting out the light—the wind from a broken window. In all my professional experience, I never saw such self-command."

"Indifference, I should call it," suggested the indignant listener.

"I don't know, my dear," he replied; "I don't know. When we got through I wondered that she did not move or stir. I looked at her, and her eyes were fixed upon the face of the unconscious child. I had to unclasp her hands from the lamp. Her fingers were cold and clammy; she was like a person in a trance. I thought she was going to fall to the floor. But, instead——"

"Instead—what?"

"Instead, she insisted upon staying there alone tonight. Would not listen to our offer of watchers. Seemed in a hurry to get us off."

"But how can a child recover in such a place? It is criminal to leave him there."

"The neighbors may be a trifle uncivilized, my dear, but they are not wanting in the common attributes of humanity. The men have been busy this evening. They have rented the little house Brown's family vacated last week, and over two hundred dollars have been already collected, and given to the mother."

But the neighbors found that they had a difficult case with which to deal. Face to face with the exigencies of her situation, the mother consented to move to the house made ready for her, but she drew sparingly upon the money given to her, and took a careful inventory of everything the house contained, with a view to paying for everything as soon as she should be able.

In an inconceivably short time, thanks to the reactive powers of healthy childhood, and the purer air, the child was able to be about the house, blithe as a little maimed bird, on his single leg and crutch. The scant sewing that the mother could procure was ill-paid, and inadequate for her needs, and she quietly opened another industry—she used to sit up half of the night addressing wrappers for a weekly newspaper, at seventy-five cents a thousand.

The doctor and his wife sometimes discussed the anomalous character of the woman with whom fate had brought them in contact.

"I can't quite make her out," the doctor once remarked; "to look at her one would think her incapable of feeling—that she had scarcely a human instinct. She is developing into the hardest business woman I ever saw. Yet I am inclined to think that the night I first saw her she was stimulated by courage of the highest order, an heroic self-forgetfulness that conquered her own physical weakness."

"I understand her perfectly," returned his wife, with prompt feminine decision; "she is constructed on a different principle from ordinary women. Some gentle instinct of sympathy—of womanly tenderness—is wanting in her composition. I have seen her day after day, you know, my dear, and I ought to be able to judge. Though she is not a bad sort of woman, at all," she generously conceded.

"Curious sort of name, isn't it?—Mrs. Ruthstand. It has a very fancy sound."

"It doesn't sound like a real name at all," returned Mrs. Belden severely. "Oh, she has a history behind her and we shall know it some day, depend upon it."

It so happened that the very next day the doctor stumbled across an old friend, newly arrived in the place, and brought him home.

"Bessie, you remember Jack Grosvenor—the oldest friend I have. You remember he would have been the best man at our wedding——"

"If he hadn't been busy getting married himself a thousand miles away. Yes, I remember. I am very glad to welcome you to our home, Mr. Grosvenor," said the doctor's wife, holding out her hand, with a winning smile.

But there was no answering smile on the face of the man she so cordially greeted. She remembered her husband's description of the gay, light-hearted fellow, and tried to identify him with this sober-faced reserved man, who had silently seated himself by the window.

"Jack has just come back with a party from the mines of Alaska," exclaimed the doctor; "he is a rich man now."

"That is very good," said Mrs. Belden absently, wondering why her husband should have made such a point of his friend's business success, or speak of it as if it were of vital interest to her.

"I am glad for Jack," proceeded the doctor, a little awkwardly; "he has been telling me something of his experiences today—you don't mind my telling Bessie, Jack, I'm sure, do you?—and he's had a terribly hard pull. Worst of all, he lost his wife."

"I am very sorry——"

"No, not that way!" hastily interrupted the doctor; "lost sight of her. He left her in Chicago three years ago. Heard from her once or twice, but his roaming life was not favorable to correspondence. Now he tells me he has lost all trace of her."

"How very strange!" Her woman's curiosity was roused. "And she was such a pretty woman, Mr. Grosvenor. I remember the lovely face of the photograph you sent us when you were married. Such a dimpled, laughing face! Where was it I saw one that reminded me of it not long ago?"

"I can't say it seems so very strange to me," remarked Grosvenor, taking part in the conversation for the first time, and speaking in a labored, husky voice; "I wonder that she put up with it so long. We had a hard time of it for years. You know how she had been reared. She was a Miss Ruth Stanhope. I was never able to provide for her in the way she had been accustomed to at home. I left her with almost nothing, and went to the far West, to seek remunerative employment, and in time drifted to Alaska. She was a proud, spirited woman. She tired of the struggle, and went back to her friends. I had hoped she might hold on, just for the sake of the boy."

"The boy? Then you had a child?"

Grosvenor assented with a mute gesture.

"Ruth Stanhope," repeated the doctor's wife slowly, looking steadily at her husband, who sent her back a significant glance; "and the boy—how old would your little son be now, Mr. Grosvenor?"

"A little more than seven years."

"Robert, I have an errand that must be attended to at once. You and Mr. Grosvenor will excuse me. I will not be long."

Mrs. Belden had snatched up a broad-brimmed hat, and was tying it under her chin as she spoke, her eyes kindled with excitement, her cheeks flushed with a sudden flame. Jack Grosvenor, aroused from his apathy, looked curiously after her as she sped down the street, her head in a whirl. As she flew along the pavement she tried to balance and arrange the queer facts and strange memories that were flitting through her brain. She remembered reading something of the splendor of Jack Grosvenor's wedding, and the contrast it had presented to their own modest nuptials.

She recalled an account she had read of the marriage-banquet, and the list of the notable guests who were in attendance. She saw in anticipation the bare room she was about to enter, with its beggarly strip of rag carpet along the center, the bedstead with its worn coverlet, the wooden chairs, and the woman bent over the bed occupied by her maimed son, and contrasted her present surroundings with the comforts and generous hospitality of that earlier home.

A high wind was blowing, and clouds of dust darkened the air about her. Battling with the force of the storm, she yet found time to marvel at the strength of character that had enabled the petted girl, born and cradled in the lap of luxury, deliberately to renounce the life of ease open to her, and condemn herself and her child to the life of toil and hardship that had resulted so disastrously. The gentle woman's heart filled with love and sympathy, and she was ready to take Jack Grosvenor's wife into her arms and cry over her sorrow and humiliations.

Her heart was chilled at the sight of the cold, proud face, whose severity was increased by the piece of stiff, white muslin bound about the head as a protection from the dust of the ironing stove.

"What! you take in ironing—you who have been so tenderly reared?"

For a moment the woman calmly gazed upon her questioner, then turning with an expressive glance to the low pallet, where her boy lay sleeping, by his side the crutch that must be his lifelong companion.

Notwithstanding the mother's impassive demeanor, the eyes of the visitor filled with sudden tears. She twirled her hat-strings, and searched the cold face, wondering how she had best communicate the tidings of which she was the bearer. She observed the dignified movement of the tall figure across the room, the shapely hand that changed the cool iron for a fresh one, and she remembered how the same hand had held the light without flinching, while the little boy's limb was being taken off. With what a disdainful front she had faced poverty, and how sternly she had repelled those who offered sympathy and help. Such a woman would ever have nerve for anything. Why should she plan to spare her what would at most be a little more than a slight surprise?

Mrs. Belden ended by flinging all her scruples to the wind.

"My husband's old friend, Jack Grosvenor, is at our house."

"Alive?"

The words spoke volumes. The pain and agony of years were concentrated in the cry. The hot iron she was holding dropped upon the lace draperies, and burned its way through them, as she clutched at the table to steady herself, while her brown eyes sought her visitor's with a look of piteous entreaty.

"Is—it—true?" she pleaded.

There was no need of answer. A man's step sounded outside, and the door was flung open, and Jack Grosvenor, returned to something like his old, impetuous self, strode across the room and caught the falling woman in his arms. The white turban fell back from the pale face, its rigid features relaxed into a happy smile, and the doctor's wife, struck by the transformation, was startled with a sudden recognition, and murmured softly:

"Sister Veronica!"

Little Edna—What is "leisure," mamma?

Mamma—It's the spare time a woman has in which she can do some other kind of work, my dear.

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JOHN'S COUSIN.

BY MRS. E. BURKE COLLINS.

"Any mail for me this morning, Miss Jones?"

The postmistress of Tarrytown, a tall, lank, angular lady "of uncertain age," elaborately over dressed, and with her auburn hair very much befrizzled and puffed, and curled in the latest agony, glanced curiously at the speaker, and frowned severely, as she shook her head in a decided negative.

Such a pretty girl, in a white lawn suit, with a broad blue sash, and a gipsy hat, with a wreath of corn-flowers about the crown, a sweet, earnest face, with deep-blue eyes and wavy brown hair.

Miss Araminta Jones grew very red, and her green eyes snapped disapproval of the lady, whose sweet young face had clouded with keen disappointment. No wonder; for of all maddening disappointments, there is surely none more intense than to look, and wait, and long for a letter which does not come.

"No letters?" she exclaimed, not attempting to hide her surprise and sorrow. "Really, I cannot understand it. Mamma," she added, in a low tone, turning to join a sweet-faced old lady in deep mourning, who waited for her in the doorway, "no letter again. I am afraid that John is ill. I will telegraph, but you know there is no office at Middleborough. It is a mile or a town, away in far-off Colorado, and—"

Here the two ladies moved away together, and Miss Araminta heard no more.

She caught her breath with a spasmodic gasp.

"John, indeed!" she muttered vindictively "the bold, audacious creature! And how dare she write to John Stanley, I'd like to know? They are strangers here, and people say that she is his cousin, but I don't believe a word of it. It is very mysterious. John Stanley leaves his native town and goes to the far West—heavens knows upon what business! He is not gone a month when, lo! these people make their appearance—this girl and the old lady, her mother. They introduce themselves as Mrs. Stanley and her daughter Dora, aunt and cousin of John Stanley. I never heard him mention such relatives, and goodness knows I ought to know something about John Stanley, when I expect to be his wife some day."

The truth of the matter was this: For several years Araminta Jones had been angling for the young man's heart and fortune—for he was a well-to-do young merchant, considerably her junior, handsome and well-educated. He had never knowingly by look or word, led Miss Jones to believe that he cared for her, but he had ever been deferential and courteous toward her, as a gentleman is in honor bound to appear toward all ladies. But one evening—one fatal evening—he had confided to Miss Araminta the fact that he was expecting to remove to a distant State where the business prospects were awaiting him, and there he intended to prepare a home for a future Mrs. Stanley; and the foolish Miss Jones had jumped to the conclusion—the wish was father to the thought—I suppose—that she was the fair lady referred to.

From that hour she had—mentally at least—appropriated John Stanley to herself. And the thought that this "bold, audacious creature" had actually written to him was quite unbearable. For Miss Araminta, in her capacity of postmistress, had, as she tersely expressed it, "seen with her own eyes" (though how she could see with other optics than her own remains a mystery) a letter addressed to "John Stanley, Middleborough, Colorado," among the Western mail; and with a great jealous pang rending her heart, she had seen it depart for its destination.

But this morning, the sight of Dora Stanley, so fair and sweet, made her desperate, and all alone in the little postoffice Miss Araminta Jones vowed a solemn vow to "be even" with Dora, and at least, if she herself could not win John Stanley, his cousin never would!

There was a vengeful light in Miss Araminta's green eyes, as she rapidly formed a little plot, the effect of which would be to completely ruin Miss Dora Stanley's hopes of winning her cousin. Even as Miss Araminta mused and plotted the Western mail came in; and as she assorted the letters her face flushed and then turned deadly pale as her glance fell upon a thick, bulky letter addressed to Mrs. Dora Stanley.

"The mother of the girl, no doubt," said Araminta, recognizing at once John's own handwriting.

She hid the letter in her pocket, and as soon as her duties in the postoffice were over she sought her own room, where by the aid of a little boiling water she soon had the envelope open, and was eagerly devouring the contents.

It was a long letter—no mistake about that! Miss Araminta's heart beat madly as she saw "Dora Darling" at the top of the sheet, and observed the signature, "Your own John."

It was all over for Miss Araminta, and hope lay quite dead in her bosom. But if she could not win his love, that other girl should not possess it. Her thin lips were compressed tightly, and her hands clenched convulsively together at the thought.

She destroyed the letter carefully, wondering a little meantime why he had addressed it to Dora's mother; then drawing a sheet of notepaper from her desk, she began to write a letter.

It was a slow and laborous process, for Miss Araminta was imitating Dora Stanley's handwriting—imitating it from a letter which lay open before her. Alas! poor Dora's second attempt at correspondence with the man she loved had gone no farther than Miss Jones' desk, and was now put to an unlawful use.

This was what Miss Jones' letter contained when at length it was finished:

"Dear Cousin John: I have been thinking seriously upon our future, and I have decided that we are not really suited to each other. Do not think hard of me—but I consider it wisest that our engagement should end. But I will always be your affectionate cousin,

DORA."

The letter being completed, it started for Colorado on the evening train, and Miss Araminta was in high spirits, so great was her hope of success. If John did not care for her, at least he shouldn't marry his cousin—and that was some consolation.

Two weeks later, Miss Araminta Jones was standing at her post, one bright sunshiny morning, when the door of the office opened, and John Stanley entered, and with him his cousin Dora. Had there been a convenient knot-hole in which the chagrined postmistress could have hidden herself, I think it would have been very welcome just then. They came straight to her side, and John spoke in the same cheery, pleasant way as of old.

"Good morning, Miss Jones," he said. "Didn't expect to see me back so soon? That little letter, breaking my engagement with my cousin Dora, brought me here to see everything right. But first, Miss Jones, allow me to present my wife!"

She stood standing in speechless horror as Dora smilingly bowed, and John went on:

"You see, my Aunt Dora Stanley had an adopted daughter of the same name, and I am afraid I was a little careless in writing Dora and I have been married nearly a year. But, as I had business in Colorado, settling up my aunt's estate, willed to her by her late husband, I thought it best to leave my wife here until the business being finished, I could return for my family. We leave tomorrow for our home in Colorado. Miss Jones, that letter was too funny for anything. As soon as I read it I knew that something was wrong; for it is not usual for a wife to address her husband as 'dear cousin,' and propose that their engagement should end. Good-by, Miss Jones. Your talents are sadly unappried, and the poor office business is not your forte."

And the same day upon which the Stanleys returned to Colorado, Miss Jones sent in her resignation, and, at the present writing, Tarrytown has no new postmistress.

Not for Willie.

"Are you an advocate of simplified spelling?"

"No. I had the chance to marry the daughter of a Pittsburg millionaire, but spelling reform spoiled the whole affair. You see we met in New York, and came to an understanding there. When she went home to Pittsburg, and I came back to Chicago. Well, I wrote just one letter to her, and like a fool I used the simplified spelling. I got a wire ten minutes after she had received my ardent missive. She informed me that it was all off. Her father had rather liked me and thought I would be a good man to relieve him of some of the responsibilities which grew out of his vast business interests, but when they got my letter they jumped to the conclusion that I had lied to them about my education. They think I'm an illiterate fortune-hunter. I have written a dozen letters to the girl since that fatal first note, but it's no good. She thinks I get somebody to fix up the spelling for me. She refuses to see me, and here I am still working for a living and likely to have to keep on doing so. Spelling reform? Nit—n-i-double-t! Not for Willie."

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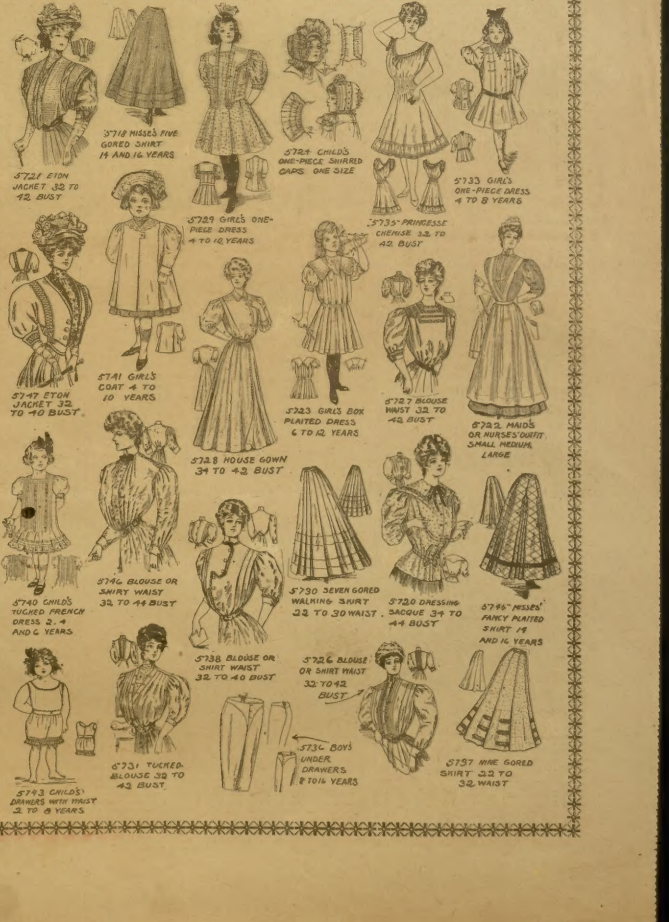
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